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MORE ONE-ACT PLAYS
BY MODERN AUTHORS

By HELEN LOUISE COHEN

ONE-ACT PLAYS BY MODERN AUTHORS
LONGER PLAYS BY MODERN AUTHORS
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THE JUNIOR PLAY BOOK
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MORE ONE-ACT PLAYS BY MODERN AUTHORS

EDITED BY

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Head of the Department of English
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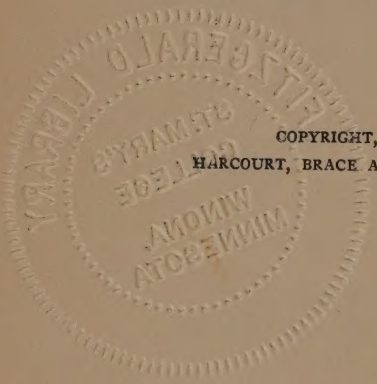

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To
M. S. S.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This editor acknowledges warmly and heartily her obligations to the friendly playwrights and the co-operating publishers whose generosity has made a collection of " more one-act plays " possible. Her gratitude, here expressed, to Harold Brighouse, Eugene O'Neill, John Erskine, Louise Driscoll, Colin Campbell Clements, Robert Frost, Hartley B. Alexander, Christopher Morley, A. A. Milne, Paul Green, Dan Totheroh, John Brandane, Austin Strong, and Lloyd Osbourne, is enthusiastic and genuine.

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A LETTER

To Teachers and Students:

As co-workers you will be reading and working on these one-act plays. The vogue of one-act plays in the professional theatre varies from year to year, but their place in the literature of the stage and hence in the classroom is, it seems, as fixed as that of the short-story in the field of fiction. The one-act play is one of the living forms of the drama. It is still employed, especially in Europe, as curtain raiser. It still finds a place on practically every music hall bill. It persists in being preferred by amateurs who work in the Little Theatres. The advantages of a small dramatic unit for class reading, study, and presentation are clear. In the one-act play, as in a small world, the action of human character, the clash of human will, the influence of human backgrounds, and the tension and release of life may be studied.

The one-act play furnishes, moreover, a variety of production problems to be considered with reference to the resources of the theatre of today and the practices of the best directors. The questions raised in connection with the various plays in this book suggest such lines of work. When a text like *More One-Act Plays by Modern Authors* is being used, the class group will want to keep in touch with new books on the theatre and with the periodical literature that deals with the subject. It is suggested that files of *Drama,* of *Theatre Magazine,* and of *Theatre Arts Monthly* be kept on reference, and that portfolios and bulletin boards show evidence of the collection of all kinds of material bearing on drama and the theatre. A cursory examination of the books on the theatre that have appeared within the last two years would offer special lines of work for individual students and teachers whose interests and abilities furnish them with the necessary

power for doing independent research. The various arts and sciences can be made to supplement the study of modern plays. Costumes, the dance, incidental music, settings, and lights can be undertaken as a piece of co-operation between the department of English and the other departments of the school. The construction of models is a procedure that always gives life to the printed page.

The study questions will lead in some cases, it is hoped, to types of creative writing, especially to the composition of original scenarios, scenes, and even complete plays. Work of this kind can never be required, but there is usually a group in every class capable of inventive effort. The questions but point the way; able teachers and students can, however, supplement such directions with others especially adapted to the class. The questions are not supposed to cover the entire field of study in the case of any one play, nor are they all supposed to be answered. They merely offer a choice of approach or a point of departure.

From the beginning, drama has been one of the most amusing games of the human race. The plays in this collection are not supposed, therefore, to offer so many educational chores, but so many opportunities for entering with zest into imagined situations.

H. L. C.

Washington Irving High School,
New York, 1 February, 1927.

THE NIGHT OF "MR. H."[1]

A Charles Lamb Pastiche

By

HAROLD BRIGHOUSE

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INTRODUCTION

THE NIGHT OF "MR. H."

The Night of "Mr. H." is a play about Charles Lamb. It tells the story of his gallant conduct under fire, when a round of hisses saluted his own two-act afterpiece, *Mr. H.*, on the occasion of its first and only performance in London at Drury Lane Theatre, on December 10, 1806. The dialogue is a tissue of allusions to the autobiographical data presented in *The Essays of Elia* and in the letters of Charles Lamb. The circumstances and characters of Mr. Brighouse's dramatic "pastiche" are also authentic. It is quite easy to say: "All, all are here, the old familiar faces." Harold Brighouse has materialized in his play the appealing charm, a blend of humor and wistfulness, that was the essence of Lamb's personality. Charles Lamb is introduced at the instant of one of his saddest moments of disillusion, the moment when he faces the undisguised fact of the failure of his play, *Mr. H.*

Besides *Mr. H.*, Lamb indulged in four other dramatic experiments: *The Witch,* a tragic fragment; *The Wife's Trial, or The Intruding Widow,* a drama; *The Pawnbroker's Daughter,* a farce; and *John Woodvil,* an attempt to perpetuate the conventions of seventeenth-century poetic tragedy. *Mr. H.* is the only one that ever saw the flickering light of the oil lamps that illuminated stage productions in the early nineteenth century. Its failure with the audience was complete and devastating. It was

not, in the critical phrase current in the twentieth century, "good theatre."

"Good theatre" has become a catch phrase of recent play reviewing, a phrase used to reward cunning manipulation of the resources of the stage to secure popular success. As a descriptive label, "good theatre" is not free from the suggestion that genuine dramatic values have been sacrificed to mere theatrical effectiveness. Dramatic history makes it plain, however, that the memorable playwrights of all countries and in all periods have possessed the talents and the technique to achieve both "good theatre" and good drama.

The trouble with Charles Lamb's plays was that they were neither the one nor the other. He illustrates the not uncommon anomaly of the sensitive and acute critic who cannot himself write a play. An inveterate playgoer, Charles Lamb's verdict on the actors and on the drama of his day was, though he is known to have served only on rare occasions as a regular dramatic critic, highly regarded in his own circle. In our own day, too, so discriminating a critic as Arthur Symons has declared: "There has been no criticism of acting in English like Lamb's, so fundamental, so intimate and elucidatory."

Lamb's outstanding contribution to dramatic criticism is found in his *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets Who Lived About the Time of Shakespeare.* This is a book of selections from the great Elizabethan playwrights, supplemented by extraordinarily perceptive notes of appreciation. "My leading design has been," so Lamb writes in the *Specimens,* "to illustrate what may be called the moral sense of our ancestors. To show in what manner they felt, when they placed themselves by the power of imagination in trying situations, in the conflict of duty and passion, or the strife of contending duties; what sort

of loves and enmities theirs were; how their griefs were tempered and their full-swoln joys abated." His purpose thus expressed seems like a significant bit of self-revelation: seems, indeed, to indicate that it was to the drama that Lamb turned for solace or for escape from the sad realities of his own life. The very nature of the situation in *Mr. H.*, involving as it does the burlesque sufferings of a comically thin-skinned individual, reflects in exaggerated form, it may be, the more serious disabilities under which Lamb himself suffered. Similarly, the high spirits which he exhibits in his relations with his sister Mary and their friends, as well as in most of his essays, only serve to set off the essential but unintentionally revealed pathos of his existence.

Mr. H., a play in two acts, was intended for use as an afterpiece. The humor of the farce turns on the ridicule to which young Mr. Hogsflesh finds himself subjected because of his name. Tradespeople, landlords, and fine ladies are all equally scornful of such a cognomen. In despair, the unfortunate gentleman resolves to disguise his humiliating surname and introduces himself as "Mr. H." He is deeply enamoured of the mellifluously styled Melesinda, who regards favorably the wooing of a wealthy young man, but cherishes also a natural curiosity in regard to the abbreviation under which he masquerades. An unfortunate combination of circumstances apprises her of his secret shame. A happy solution is provided by a friend who announces that, as a result of official intervention, henceforth Mr. Hogsflesh is to take and use the surname and arms of Bacon. The play is trivial in theme but amusing. Its humors arise less from the central situation than from the liberally distributed quips and puns of the text.

The irony of Lamb's anticipations of success is touch-

ing. On December 5, 1806, he wrote to his friend Thomas Manning, then in China:

It is in rehearsal actually, and I expect it to come out next week. It is kept a sort of secret, and the rehearsals have gone on privately, lest by many friends knowing it, the story should come out, which would infallibly damn it. You remember I had sent it before you went. Wroughton read it, and was much pleased with it. I speedily got an answer. I took it to make alterations, and lazily kept it some months, then took courage and furbished it up in a day or two and took it. In less than a fortnight I heard the principal part was given to Elliston, who liked it and only wanted a prologue, which I have since done and sent, and I had a note the day before yesterday from the manager, Wroughton (bless his fat face! he is not a bad actor in some things), to say that I should be summoned to the rehearsal after the next, which next was to be yesterday. I had no idea it was so forward. I have had no trouble, attended no reading or rehearsal, made no interest. What a contrast to the usual parade of authors! But it is peculiar to modesty to do all things without noise or pomp. I have some suspicion it will appear in public on Wednesday next, for Wroughton says in his note, it is so forward that if wanted it may come out next week, and a new melodrama is announced for every day till then; and "a new farce is in rehearsal," is put up in the bills. Now you'd like to know the subject. The title is Mr. H., no more. How simple, how taking! A great H. sprawling over the play-bill and attracting eyes at every corner. The story is a coxcomb appearing at Bath, vastly rich—all the ladies dying for him—all bursting to know who he is; but he goes by no other name than Mr. H.—a curiosity like that of the dames of Strasburg about the man with the great nose. But I won't tell you any more about it. Yes, I will; but I can't give you an idea how I have done it. I'll just tell you that after much vehement admiration, when his true name comes out, "Hogsflesh," all the women shun him, avoid him, and not one can be found to change their name

for him. That's the idea. How flat it is here—but how whimsical in the farce! And only think how hard upon me it is that the ship is despatched tomorrow and my triumph cannot be ascertained till the Wednesday after; but all China will ring of it by and by.

Then, the day following the *début* of *Mr. H.*, Lamb, in a letter to Wordsworth, briefly records the dismal outcome of his high enterprise.

Mary's love to all of you. I wouldn't let her write.

Dear Wordsworth,—Mr. H. came out last night and failed. I had many fears; the subject was not substantial enough. John Bull must have solider fare than a Letter. We are pretty stout about it, have had plenty of condoling friends, but after all, we had rather it should have succeeded. You will see the Prologue in most of the Morning Papers. It was received with such shouts as I never witness'd to a Prologue. It was attempted to be encored. How hard! a thing I did merely as a task, because it was wanted—and set no great store by; and Mr. H. . . . !

The quantity of friends we had in the house, my brother and I being in Public Offices, etc., was astonishing—but they yielded at length to a few hisses. A hundred hisses—damn the word—I write it like kisses—how different—a hundred hisses outweigh a thousand claps. The former come more directly from the Heart. Well, 'tis withdrawn and there is an end.

C. L.

Better Luck to us . . .

11 Dec.—(Turn over.)

P.S. Pray when any of you write to the Clarksons, give our kind Loves and say we shall not be able to come and see them at Xmas—as I shall have but a day or two,—and tell them we bear our mortification pretty well.

As the following passages bear witness, the hisses of that December night were as so many wounds. Lamb

wrote in his essay *On the Custom of Hissing at the Theatre,* in Leigh Hunt's magazine, *The Reflector:*

Oh! Mr. Reflector, is it not a pity that the sweet human voice, which was given man to speak with, to sing with, to whisper tones of love in, to express compliance, to convey a favour, or to grant a suit,—that voice which in a Siddons or a Braham rouses us, in a Siren Catalani charms and captivates us,—that the musical, expressive human voice should be converted into a rival of the noises of silly geese and irrational, venomous snakes?

Elsewhere he writes even more bitterly on the same subject. Here is no concealing of the hurt:

It was not a hiss neither, but a sort of a frantic yell like a congregation of mad geese, with roaring something like bears, mows and mops like apes, sometimes snakes, that hissed me into madness. 'Twas like St. Anthony's temptations. Mercy on us, that God should give His favorite children, men, mouths to speak with, to discourse rationally, to promise smoothly, to flatter agreeably, to encourage warmly, to counsel wisely: to sing with, to drink with, and to kiss with: and that they should turn them into the mouths of adders, bears, wolves, hyenas and whistle like tempests, and emit breath through them like distillations of aspic poison, to asperse and vilify the innocent labours of their fellow creatures who are desirous to please them!

But Lamb came to be perfectly conscious of the fact that he was not satisfactorily equipped for play writing. Twenty-one years after the failure of *Mr. H.* at Drury Lane, he confessed to Mrs. Shelley that dialogue held no difficulties for him,

but the damned plot,—I believe I must omit it altogether. The scenes come one after another like geese, not marshalled

like cranes or a Hyde Park review. . . . I want some Howard Payne to sketch a skeleton of artfully-succeeding scenes through a whole play, as the courses are arranged in a cookery-book, I to find in it, passion, sentiment, character, and the like trifles; to lay in the dead colours—I'd Titianesque 'em up; to mark the channel in a cheek (smooth or furrowed, yours or mine), and where tears should course, I'd draw the water down; to say where a joke should come in, or a pun be left out; to bring my personæ on and off like a Beau Nash, and I'd Frankenstein them there; to bring three together on the stage at once,—they are so shy with me that I can get no more than two, and there they stand until it is the time, without being the season, to withdraw them.

It is interesting to Americans to learn that *Mr. H.* enjoyed a measure of success when it was presented in this country. The play was given in New York in 1807 and in 1812 in Philadelphia, when the actor-manager William B. Wood took the leading rôle. It remained in his repertory for ten or twelve years.

To the sequence of events at the opening night of *Mr. H.*, at Drury Lane, Lamb, as the excerpts from his writings show, reverted without shame in friendly letter and in familiar essay. The disaster is well documented. It is amusing to trace to their sources the other episodes that Harold Brighouse has utilized and the dialogue which he has devised.

The scene of *The Night of "Mr. H."* is laid in Charles Lamb's rooms in the Inner Temple. There it was that, at one time, Charles Lamb and his sister, Mary, were in the habit of receiving their friends regularly on Wednesday nights. Conversation, cold supper, and whist furnished the entertainment. In the setting suggested by the stage directions of Mr. Brighouse's play, "Hogarth figures prominently" in the scheme of decoration. This

background has Lamb's own authority, for early in 1810, he was writing to a friend, "In my best room is a choice collection of the works of Hogarth, an English painter of some humour." Robert William Elliston, who did in reality take the part of the luckless Mr. H., is introduced by Brighouse. Lamb devoted two brief though charming essays to this actor, *Ellistoniana* and *To the Shade of Elliston.* The journalist, Henry Crabb Robinson, later a lawyer, who figures likewise in this dramatic reconstruction of the failure of Lamb's play, had just met the Lambs in this very year. His diary is the source of much information about the brother and the sister. George Dyer, like Lamb, had been a Christ's Hospital boy, but not in Lamb's day. The two were probably introduced by Coleridge. Dyer, beloved by Lamb, was in real life a literary hack, scholarly and painstaking, "wasting his fine erudition," as Lamb himself put it, "in silent corrections of the classics." The many endearing anecdotes of his absent-mindedness have the true flavor of the study. John Rickman, another character set upon the stage by Brighouse, had been introduced to Lamb by Dyer six years before the opening night of *Mr. H.* Of him Lamb wrote to his friend Manning: "This Rickman lives in our Buildings, immediately opposite our house; the finest fellow to drop in o' nights, about nine or ten o'clock—cold bread-and-cheese time—just in the *wishing* time of the night, when you *wish* for somebody to come in, without a distinct idea of a probable anybody. . . . He is a most pleasant hand: a fine rattling fellow, has gone through life laughing at solemn apes."

The dialogue of the opening minutes of our play, the conversation between John Rickman and his wife, is based on a well known passage in Lamb's essay, *Old*

China, in which Bridget Elia, really the humorist's sister, is made to exclaim:

"Do you remember the brown suit, which you made to hang upon you, till all your friends cried shame upon you, it grew so threadbare—and all because of that folio Beaumont and Fletcher, which you dragged home late at night from Barker's in Covent Garden? Do you remember how we eyed it for weeks before we could make up our minds to the purchase, and had not come to a determination till it was near ten o'clock of the Saturday night, when you set off from Islington, fearing you should be too late—and when the old bookseller with some grumbling opened his shop, and by the twinkling taper (for he was setting bedwards) lighted out the relic from his dusty treasures—and when you lugged it home, wishing it were twice as cumbersome—and when you presented it to me—and when we were exploring the perfectness of it (*collating* you called it)—and while I was repairing some of the loose leaves with paste, which your impatience would not suffer to be left till daybreak—was there no pleasure in being a poor man? or can those neat black clothes which you wear now, and are so careful to keep brushed, since we have become rich and finical, give you half the honest vanity with which you flaunted it about in that overworn suit—your old corbeau—for four or five weeks longer than you should have done, to pacify your conscience for the mighty sum of fifteen—or sixteen shillings was it?—a great affair we thought it then—which you had lavished on the old folio. Now you can afford to buy any book that pleases you, but I do not see that you ever bring me home any nice old purchases now."

The Mrs. Battle of Brighouse's play owes all to the Sarah Battle—whose flesh-and-blood prototype has been identified—of *The Essays of Elia.* Lamb enshrines her in this memorable passage:

"A clear fire, a clean hearth, and the rigor of the game." This was the celebrated wish of old Sarah Battle (now with

God), who, next to her devotions, loved a good game of whist. She was none of your lukewarm gamesters, your half and half players, who have no objection to take a hand, if you want one to make up a rubber; who affirm that they have no pleasure in winning; that they like to win one game, and lose another; that they can while away an hour very agreeably at a card-table, but are indifferent whether they play or no; and will desire an adversary, who has slipped a wrong card, to take it up and play another. These insufferable triflers are the curse of a table. One of these flies will spoil a whole pot. Of such it may be said that they do not play at cards, but only play at playing at them.

Sarah Battle was none of that breed. She detested them, as I do, from her heart and soul; and would not, save upon a striking emergency, willingly seat herself at the same table with them. She loved a thorough-paced partner, a determined enemy. She took, and gave, no concessions. She hated favours. She never made a revoke, nor ever passed it over in her adversary without exacting the utmost forfeiture. She fought a good fight: cut and thrust. She held not her good sword (her cards) "like a dancer." She sate bolt upright; and neither showed you her cards, nor desired to see yours. All people have their blind side—their superstitions; and I have heard her declare, under the rose, that Hearts was her favourite suit.

I never in my life—and I knew Sarah Battle many of the best years of it—saw her take out her snuff-box when it was her turn to play; or snuff a candle in the middle of a game; or ring for a servant, till it was fairly over. She never introduced, or connived at, miscellaneous conversation during its process. As she emphatically observed, cards were cards: and if I ever saw unmingled distaste in her fine last-century countenance, it was at the airs of a young gentleman of a literary turn, who had been with difficulty persuaded to take a hand; and who, in his excess of candour, declared, that he thought there was no harm in unbending the mind now and then, after serious studies, in recreation of that kind! She could not bear to have her noble occupation, to which she wound up her facul-

ties, considered in that light. It was her business, her duty, the thing she came into the world to do,—and she did it. She unbent her mind afterwards—over a book.

The eulogy of roast pig on pages 21-22 is, of course, thoroughly in character with the author of the famous *Dissertation* on the subject. To George Dyer, Brighouse has transferred Lamb's often-quoted thrust at Martin Burney, "Martin, if dirt were trumps, what a hand you'd have!" The witticism on the Flood, as the first water-cure, reproduced on page 29, is authentic Lamb repartee. The reference to the Lake country on the same page and Lamb's cockney preferences are likewise authentic. Yet Lamb did write after his visit to Coleridge in 1802: "Such an impression I never received from objects of sight before, nor do I suppose I can ever again. Glorious creatures, fine old fellows, Skiddaw, &c. I shall never forget ye, how ye lay about that night, like an intrenchment; gone to bed, as it seemed for the night, but promising that ye were to be seen in the morning."

When, in 1834, Nathaniel Parker Willis encountered Charles and Mary Lamb at a breakfast at Crabb Robinson's, he recorded his impressions thus: Lamb's conversation "was so in the vein of his inimitable writings, that I could have fancied myself listening to an audible composition of new Elias." This remark of our traveling American man of letters conveys the impression produced by the dialogue of Brighouse's play.

The dramatic suggestiveness of Lamb's career has appealed to an American writer, Alice Brown, who has made an appealing full-length play of the conflicts in Elia's life. *Charles Lamb* presents within its four acts the chief circumstances in the life of the essayist in the course of the thirty-seven years which begin in 1796. Among the numerous historical characters introduced by

Miss Brown, George Dyer and Crabb Robinson figure, as they do in the Brighouse pastiche.

The dramatization of the lives of great writers is a common enough practice. *Oliver Goldsmith,* by Augustus Thomas; *Will Shakespeare,* by Clemence Dane; *Fortune and Men's Eyes,* by Josephine Preston Peabody; and *Robert Burns,* by John Drinkwater, to mention some of the well known biographical plays written about the lives of literary personages, are more or less successful experiments in this variety of drama. The biographies of men of letters are naturally rich in documents for the dramatist. They provide incidents to be co-ordinated and subordinated, motives to be marshalled, characters to be grouped, and a background ready to hand. A journeyman playwright equally with a master of the craft does well to scan the annals of literary history for the raw materials of drama.

The Night of Mr. "H.": a room in the Inner Temple. This design attempts to recapture the atmosphere of eighteenth-century bookishness, in which Charles Lamb lived. Tall folios and choice prints are indicated.

THE NIGHT OF "MR. H."

CHARACTERS

CHARLES LAMB (*31*), *of the East India House.*
MARY LAMB (*41*), *his Sister.*
ROBERT WILLIAM ELLISTON (*32*), *of Drury Lane.*
MISS MELLON (*29*), *of Drury Lane.*
CRABB ROBINSON (*31*), *a Barrister.*
GEORGE DYER (*51*), *a Poet.*
JOHN RICKMAN (*35*), *a House of Commons Clerk.*
MRS. RICKMAN (*21*), *his Wife.*
MRS. BATTLE (*60*).

SCENE.—CHARLES LAMB'S *rooms, Inner Temple, on the night of December 10, 1806. Down stage R. is a door; opposite it, L., a window. Above the door is the fireplace—before the time of hearthrugs—and above the window, L., is a bookcase. It is a room of books and prints. Hogarth figures prominently. Old chairs, older than the period, before the fire, and a small table between them. Candles on mantel. Also long pipes and tobacco jar. A partition runs across behind (or, if simpler, a curtain). A large folding door in it is open and discloses a small dining-room beyond, with table laid, very simply, with light cold supper. Candles on table. Door up L. leads out from the dining-room. The dining table is round. Nine chairs all drawn up to it. A bright fire in the hearth, with kettle on it. In the L. corner a grandfather clock shows the time as 11:15.*

As the curtain rises, JOHN RICKMAN *is standing at the bookcase, examining an old folio. He is a scholarly man*

of 35. MRS. RICKMAN *enters up L. with decanter, which she adds to several already on the table. She is bright, and pretty, and young, and her dress makes a patch of colour in the room. She surveys the table.*

MRS. RICKMAN. Well, John, I think I've finished. [JOHN *grunts.*] I say, I think all's ready for them, John.

RICKMAN. Yes. [*His eyes are fixed on the folio.*]

MRS. RICKMAN. Can you see if I've forgotten anything?

RICKMAN. Perfect. Quite perfect.

MRS. RICKMAN [*coming down to him*]. John, will you put that book down and look at the table?

RICKMAN. My dear, this is not a book. It is the book. The folio Beaumont and Fletcher which Mr. Lamb has talked for months of buying. And he's got it.

MRS. RICKMAN. He'd sell his shirt to buy a book.

RICKMAN. A man must have a library.

MRS. RICKMAN. And go threadbare to pay for it.

RICKMAN. Oh, if his farce has a good run, he can afford new clothes. [*Replacing the book.*]

MRS. RICKMAN. And he will buy old books instead, and Mary will encourage him to do it, and Mr. Lamb will continue to go to the East India House in his overworn brown suit that I have known as long as I have known him. And his hat! Oh, John, his hat!

RICKMAN. My dear, you are a perfect wife, and it has been observed of wives before today that they are apt to be uncharitable to the friends their husbands had the misfortune to make when they were bachelors.

MRS. RICKMAN. I suppose I show it now by coming in to look after the supper instead of going to Drury Lane with them.

RICKMAN. There's an adorable curl behind your ear which I shall kiss.

MRS. RICKMAN [*as he takes her*]. John, don't be absurd. Suppose they came in now and saw.

RICKMAN. They'll never see a better sight than you.

MRS. RICKMAN [*escaping from him*]. I asked you is the table right?

RICKMAN [*admiring her*]. Of course it is. You set it.

MRS. RICKMAN. Will you look at it?

RICKMAN [*up to table*]. Then let me see. [*Handling decanters.*] Port wine, brandy, gin—

MRS. RICKMAN. Oh, all a man can think about.

RICKMAN. Now, how can we toast the success of Mr. Lamb's farce unless we have the wherewithal?—Food is an everyday affair—a three-times-a-day affair—but we're to celebrate a triumph here tonight, and that's a thing that can't be done by food—nor in the absence of lemons, either.

MRS. RICKMAN. Lemons! [*Shows him them.*]

RICKMAN. You think of everything. But, no. Achilles had a heel and you—well, Mrs. Rickman, you've an ankle, but you have forgotten hot water.

MRS. RICKMAN. I believe the kettle's boiling, John.

RICKMAN. Then why shouldn't I go back to Mr. Lamb's Beaumont and Fletcher?

MRS. RICKMAN. Because I hear them coming up the stairs.

RICKMAN [*to table*]. You do? Quick, then. Glasses. We'll toast the radiant author as he brings his laurels home. [*Fills glass and to door.*] Fill yours while I get the door open. [*She fills.*] Ready?

MRS. RICKMAN [*to door*]. Yes.

RICKMAN. Now then. [*He opens door, and they pose with raised glasses.*] To "Mr. H."! [*Then they see something is wrong, and lower their glasses. There enter* MARY LAMB, MRS. BATTLE, GEORGE DYER, CRABB ROBINSON. *Door closed. They are in coats and wraps.* MARY *and* MRS. BATTLE *need no description.* DYER *was extremely short-sighted. He was a poet, but more of a publisher's hack, a genial fellow of whom* LAMB *was very fond, though he poked terrible fun at him.* ROBINSON *is a young barrister, and a close friend of* LAMB.]

RICKMAN. Mary, what's happened?

MARY. The worst that could have happened, Mr. Rickman.

RICKMAN. To Charles? Where is he?

MARY. He went behind the scenes to speak with Mr. Elliston. But, Mrs. Rickman, you— [*Looking at table.*]

MRS. RICKMAN. We got here early, and I thought you'd like things ready.

MARY. It was most kind of you. Mrs. Battle, shall we take our clothes within?

MRS. BATTLE. Thank you, Mary.

RICKMAN. But tell us what's occurred.

MARY. Ask Crabb. Come, Mrs. Battle. Mrs. Rickman, will you come? [*They go out up L.* DYER *and* ROBINSON *take off coats, which are put out of sight behind the partition.*]

RICKMAN. What is it, Crabb?

ROBINSON. A failure, Rickman.

RICKMAN. Failure. Impossible. There must be some mistake.

DYER. I assure you, sir, that there was no mistake about the hisses.

RICKMAN. Hissed off! In spite of having Elliston to act for him. [*They nod.*] Poor Charlie Lamb. How did he take it?

ROBINSON. How? Bravely. Hissed with the best of them.

RICKMAN. Hissed his own farce!

DYER. I always said the critic was the stronger part of him.

ROBINSON. That's as good as saying you agreed with the audience, Mr. Dyer. [*They sit.*]

DYER. Sir, I agreed with the author.

ROBINSON. He counted on success. Counted too high, perhaps. But money's needed here, and he was looking to receive two hundred pounds from the theatre and another one hundred pounds for the copyright.

DYER. Extravagant.

RICKMAN. Now, hang it, George, would he be Charlie Lamb if he were not extravagant?

DYER [*looking round*]. Well, well, he will find consolation here.

ROBINSON. Amongst his friends?

DYER. Amongst his greatest friends, Mr. Robinson. Not men, but books. As Southey says—

> "Around me I behold
> Where'er these casual eyes are cast
> The mighty minds of old;
> My never-failing friends are they,
> With whom I converse night and day."

RICKMAN. Does Southey say that?

DYER. Does he? My dear sir, I thought you knew Southey.

RICKMAN. I know Southey, and I read Shakespeare. What's the use of spoiling a good friendship by reading your friends' poems? Why, hang me, they would ask what I thought of 'em, and, if I told them, there's an end to friendship.

DYER. Am I to take it, you do not read my poetry, sir?

RICKMAN. I don't, George, but I do a rarer thing for you than that. I buy it. [*Enter up L.* MARY, MRS. BATTLE, MRS. RICKMAN. *The men rise.*]

MARY [*at table*]. Will you sit down to supper, gentlemen?

ROBINSON. Without Charles?

MARY. I'm sure he would prefer it. The—the little mishap must not be let to spoil our evening.

MRS. BATTLE. The sooner supper is over, the sooner we can begin our whist, Mr. Robinson.

ROBINSON. Ah, Mrs. Battle. You have a single eye to the essential thing in life. [*They are settling at table.*]

RICKMAN. Mary, you're sure the strain is not too much for you?

MARY. It's a distraction, Mr. Rickman. [DYER *is last to go up to table. As he goes, enter R.* CHARLES LAMB, ELLISTON, MISS MELLON. *According to Leigh Hunt, "Lamb was under the middle size, and of fragile make, but with a head as fine as if it had been carved on purpose." "No man," wrote Mrs. Charles Mathews, "was ever less beholden to his tailor. His*

brand new suit was drolly contrasted with his very rusty silk stockings and his much too large thick shoes without polish. His hair was black and sleek, but not formal, and his face the gravest I ever saw, but indicating great intellect." ELLISTON *was the favourite comedian of his day.* MISS MELLON, *then 29, need not look it. She was beautiful, and, through her connection with Coutts, rich. They rise at table.* MARY *comes forward.*]

CHARLES [*he speaks with a stutter. This should not be emphasised but suggested*]. Mary, Mary, my dear, Miss Mellon and Mr. Elliston of Drury Lane have done us the very great honour of coming here to supper tonight.

ELLISTON. The honour, sir, is ours.

CHARLES. Miss Mellon, my sister.

MISS MELLON. You have a brilliant brother, Miss Lamb.

MARY. Oh, Miss Mellon, how I enjoyed your playing in his farce.

DYER [*to* ELLISTON, *taking his coat*]. Allow me, sir.

ELLISTON. I thank you, sir.

CHARLES. Mr. Elliston, my sister.

ELLISTON. Your servant, madam.

MARY. Yours, Mr. Elliston. Miss Mellon, will you come with me to leave your cloak within?

MISS MELLON. Thank you, Miss Lamb. [*Exeunt* MARY *and* MISS MELLON, *up L.* RICKMAN *and* ROBINSON *accost* ELLISTON. *They take snuff, and form a group.*]

CHARLES [*as* RICKMAN *comes down*]. Rickman, I'm glad to see you. Your servant, Mrs. Rickman. Pray don't disturb yourself.

MRS. RICKMAN. We'd hardly sat down yet. [*Coming down to him.*] Why, Mr. Lamb, how fashionable you are with your new coat.

CHARLES. Some are born fashionable, Mrs. Rickman; some achieve fashion; and others, like your humble servant, have fashion thrust upon them. I assure you I am very angry with my tailor, madam.

MRS. RICKMAN. Indeed, Mr. Lamb! But why?

CHARLES. Bless my soul, madam, behold me. A lapelled coat with a velvet collar and the Lord knows how many buttons to a side. Listen, Mrs. Rickman. My tailor was robbed the other day, coming with his wife and family in a one-horse shay from Hampstead. They took his money but they didn't shoot him, and when they rode off, "Gentlemen," he says, "I wish you good-night and we are very much obliged to you that you have not used us ill." And this is the cuckoo that has had the audacity to foist upon me ten buttons on a side and a black velvet collar. A cursed ninth of a scoundrel. Lord! and to think I once knew a young man who wanted to be a tailor but hadn't the spirit.

MRS. RICKMAN. I don't believe a word of it, Mr. Lamb. You're as proud as punch of your new coat, or you wouldn't talk so much of it.

DYER [*coming round to* CHARLES]. Charles, a word in your ear.

CHARLES. Yes? [MRS. RICKMAN *joins* MRS. BATTLE *at the dining table.*]

DYER. I feel this junketing is most inappropriate. We ought to go.

CHARLES. Go? Desert a man when he's down? George, I'm surprised at you.

DYER. But the supper, Charles.

CHARLES. What's the matter with the supper? It's a very nice supper.

DYER. But tonight—

CHARLES. We must eat, George—and drink, I trust. Cheer up, man. This was to have been a birthday party and it's turned out a funeral feast, but I hope the mourners can be merry. Why, look at that table, George. It's groaning with roast pig. Pig, man, pig!

DYER. A tolerable dish.

CHARLES. Tolerable! Have you no soul at all? I'm not a glutton, but I can't behold roast pig with such indifference. [*Leads him to table.*] Look at the crackling. The colour of ripe pomegranate. And brain sauce, George. Don't tell me

you despise roast pig. A man is known by the company he keeps and the pig he eats, and I tell you it is not every common gullet fancier that can properly esteem roast pig. But if you love me, George, you'll love my pig. And apple dumplings, too. I hope you like 'em?

DYER. Quite well.

CHARLES. Thank God for that. A man couldn't have a pure mind who refuses apple dumplings. And look at that cheese, sir. Why, I led it home, myself.

DYER. Led it?

CHARLES. The shopwoman asked me should she send it. "Give me a piece of string," I said, "and I will lead it home."

DYER. Why, Charles, if you're in such high spirits after a failure, what would you be after a success?

CHARLES. I should be rich, and being rich I might afford to tell the truth. Tonight I must pretend, and you must help me, George, for Mary's sake. She takes this failure badly, and I must seem to be light-hearted or her illness may return. Seem merry though you may be sad.

DYER. I will try, Charles, though it's a trouble to a matter-of-fact man.

CHARLES. Now I value myself on being a matter-of-lie man. That's why I am called "Old Honesty" and sometimes "Upright Telltruth Esquire." The fact is, George, truth is precious and not to be wasted on everybody. [*He goes to group with* ELLISTON, *and* RICKMAN *speaks.*]

RICKMAN. Charles, Mr. Elliston is telling us he means to play the farce a second night.

ELLISTON. Decidedly.

CHARLES. Decidedly not. A farce that's damned ought to be dead. And didn't they damn it!

ELLISTON. There was a habit of sibilation in the house, but, sir, you make too much of it. Gentlemen, they have hissed me.

ROBINSON. They changed their minds there, Mr. Elliston.

ELLISTON. And so they will of Mr. Lamb's farce when it is played again. [CHARLES *shakes his head.*] I have known

many a play survive a rough reception and live a long life after a painful birth.

CHARLES. They'll get no second chance with me. Damn them, how they hissed! It was not a hiss, neither, but a sort of mad yell, like a congregation of mad geese. Mercy on us, that God should give men mouths to speak with, sing with, drink with, kiss with, and that they should turn them into mouths of adders, bears, wolves, hyenas, and whistle like tempests to asperse and vilify the innocent labours of their fellow-creatures who are desirous to please them! [MARY *and* MISS MELLON *re-enter up L.*]

ELLISTON. But, Mr. Lamb—

CHARLES [*checking him and going up to table, where he collects decanters and glasses, and brings them down to small table by fire*]. Mary, Mr. Elliston has the generosity to think he ought to act my afterpiece again. I have the modesty to suppose the public meant what they howled tonight, and Mr. Elliston and I will talk it out together with a glass of wine. If you will, in the meantime, sit to supper, we will join you later on.

MARY. Very well, Charles. Will you come, gentlemen? [*All but* CHARLES *and* ELLISTON *up to table. The folding doors are closed from inside by* ROBINSON. CHARLES *motions* ELLISTON *to chair by fire.*]

CHARLES. Port, Mr. Elliston?

ELLISTON. I thank you, sir.

CHARLES. I argue best on gin. [*He pours, then gets pipes and tobacco from mantel.*] Do you smoke?

ELLISTON. I take a pipe occasionally.

CHARLES. I wish I did so little. Tobacco is my evening comfort and my morning curse. That's what is wrong with "Mr. H.," sir. It has the mark of the beast tobacco upon it. A smoking man must write smoky farces. I'm going to leave off tobacco and then I must thrive. [*Lighting pipe at candle.*] But not on farces, Mr. Elliston.

ELLISTON. I see no reason why you should not thrive on "Mr. H."

CHARLES. The public did, and said so loudly.

ELLISTON. We are the servants of the public, Mr. Lamb, but our masters sometimes make mistakes, and I for one shall always hold they were on the wrong scent tonight.

CHARLES. They hunted keenly, right or wrong.

ELLISTON. Let me persuade you to forget tonight, and give the play another chance. Believe me, sir, I am not used to plead with authors.

CHARLES. That's certain, and I am most grateful to you. If anything could have saved my farce, your acting would have done it.

ELLISTON. You take tonight's reception too hardly, Mr. Lamb.

CHARLES. I own I'm cut. I had great hopes, but, as an honest man, I'm bound to tell you this—that I agreed with the general opinion—my play was trifling.

ELLISTON. An afterpiece should be a trifle, and I protest that "Mr. H." is a very gay trifle. It's whimsical and entertaining, and it's full of epigrams.

CHARLES. But not of happy grams. It's the trifling work of an upstart trifler. Good God, sir, who am I that I should aspire to be of that great line whose work has dignified the boards of Drury Lane? See, there they are. [*At bookcase.*] Shakespeare, Massinger, Beaumont and Fletcher, Ford—

ELLISTON. True, but the classics are the classics. They are a thing apart, but they were modern once, and we have men today whose names will shine illustrious as theirs.

CHARLES. Today? What men? I know of none.

ELLISTON. Come, sir, there is Mr. Holcroft, who wrote "The Road to Ruin."

CHARLES. A very good friend of mine, Mr. Elliston, but like the rest, he is no candidate for immortality.

ELLISTON. The rest? Sir, if Mr. Sheridan is dead, I've missed the news of it.

CHARLES. The dramatist is dead. The man lives on. And even Sheridan—

ELLISTON. Come, Mr. Lamb, I shall suspect you of jealousy.

CHARLES. Then you would wrong me. But I am a critic and I will maintain "The School for Scandal" is incongruous, a mixture of Congreve with sentimental incongruities.

ELLISTON. Flat blasphemy.

CHARLES. Oh, it has delicious scenes which give it zest, but these are the fellows for my palate. [*Handling books.*] Congreve, Farquhar, Vanbrugh, yes, even Wycherley. No moralists, I warrant you, but I'm the gayer for them and the sadder for the drama of common life that spoils us all today. Give me the old plays, Mr. Elliston.

ELLISTON. The times cannot bear them.

CHARLES. The worse for the times. Isn't it good now and then for a dream-while or so to imagine a world with no meddling restrictions, the Utopia of gallantry, where pleasure is duty and the manners perfect freedom? It's Fairyland, a pageant where we should sit as unconcerned at the issues as at the battle of the frogs and mice.

ELLISTON. Write us another "Way of the World," Mr. Lamb, and I promise you it shall be acted.

CHARLES. If Lambs were lions, Mr. Elliston! No, Drury Lane will see no more of me as author.

ELLISTON. I hope that isn't true. I'm ready now to make a false prophet of you by playing "Mr. H." again.

CHARLES. Please, please, Mr. Elliston.

ELLISTON. You're quite determined?

CHARLES. Quite.

ELLISTON. Well, sir, I'm disappointed.

CHARLES. And I shall not forget the kindness of this offer. Meantime, I keep a starving man from meat. Will you go in to supper?

ELLISTON. I thank you. But you are coming, too?

CHARLES. Excuse me to the company. I must sit still a while. My head has bells in it and I must show my sister nothing but a smiling face. You understand me! I told you of her malady.

ELLISTON. Then you will join us—

CHARLES. In a minute. [*Exit* ELLISTON, *C.* CHARLES *sits by fire, drinks, leans back drowsily.*] Wycherley, Vanbrugh, Farquhar. "The Country Wife," "The Relapse," "The Beaux' Stratagem," "The Confederacy." All, all the old familiar faces. [*He sleeps. The Scene is blacked out. Lights up, after a minute, to indicate the passing of an hour.* MARY *stands with her hand on* CHARLES' *shoulder.*]

MARY. Charles.

CHARLES [*rousing*]. God bless my soul, I've been asleep. [*Rising, contrite.*] Asleep with a roomful of guests! Dreaming . . . dreaming of old plays.

MARY. You were tired. No one would let you be disturbed.

CHARLES. They've not gone home?

MARY. Not yet. They sit at cards.

CHARLES. It's card time? [*Looks at clock.*] I've slept through supper.

MARY. Yes.

CHARLES. And missed roast pig. Lord, it's as well I did, Mary. If I can dream like this without eating pig, heaven knows what my dreams might be after it. But has it struck you I'm supposed to be a host tonight? [*He goes up and opens folding doors fully. They remain open. Inside, the dining table is now moved to the R., so that only its end is seen. C. is a card table. At it,* RICKMAN, ELLISTON, MRS. BATTLE, *and* MRS. RICKMAN *sit at whist.* ELLISTON *partners* MRS. BATTLE. *At the dining table,* DYER, MISS MELLON, *and* ROBINSON *are seen at a cribbage board.* DYER *nearest down. Candles on table.*] Ladies, gentlemen, I really must apologise—

MRS. BATTLE [*severely*]. I will thank you not to interrupt us, Mr. Lamb. We are at whist.

CHARLES. I beg your pardon, Mrs. Battle, but—

MRS. BATTLE. But cards are cards.

RICKMAN [*pleasantly*]. And a very pleasant way of unbending the mind after serious studies.

MRS. BATTLE [*freezing* RICKMAN]. Your lead, Mr. Elliston.

ELLISTON. I believe it is, madam. [CHARLES *comes down to fireplace and fills pipe.*]

MRS. BATTLE. Then oblige me by playing quickly, so that I may the sooner leave a table where a young man tells me he unbends to cards.

RICKMAN. I assure you, Mrs. Battle— [CHARLES, *stuffing pipe, goes up to R. and stands by the cribbage players. He bends, and looks at* DYER'S *hand, which has a conspicuous black mark on it.*]

MRS. BATTLE. Actions speak louder than words, Mr. Rickman. I hate a lukewarm gamester. Give me a clear fire, a clean hearth, and the rigour of the game. You do not play at cards, but only play at playing them. [*The game proceeds in silence.* CHARLES *indicates* DYER'S *hand to* MARY, *down by fireplace.*]

CHARLES. Mary, what's happened to George Dyer's hand?

MARY. He blackened it when he came in here for the kettle and the poor man's too short-sighted to perceive it.

CHARLES. Lord, if dirt were trumps, what a hand he'd hold. [*Lights pipe.*]

MARY. Is it not too late to smoke again?

CHARLES. It's never too late to smoke. I hope I may draw in my last breath through a pipe and exhale it in a pun. [*The whist party rise.*]

MRS. BATTLE. That makes the rubber, Mr. Elliston.

ELLISTON. I have to thank you, madam, for your partnership.

MRS. BATTLE. The victory's too easy when your opponent is unbending to the game.

RICKMAN [*politely offering*]. Your winnings, Mrs. Battle.

MRS. BATTLE [*taking*]. Thank you, Mr. Rickman. Next time you play at cards I recommend you to play at cribbage. Whist is a game for players. Mary, I'm going home. Take me for my clothes.

MARY. You must go now?

MRS. BATTLE. It's time I was in my bed.

MRS. RICKMAN. We must go, too, Mary. [*Exeunt, up L.*, MARY, MRS. BATTLE, MISS MELLON.]

ELLISTON. 'Pon my word, Mr. Lamb, the old lady can play whist, but what a dragon.

CHARLES. Mrs. Battle? Oh, but I value her beyond all computation.

RICKMAN. A priceless antique.

ELLISTON. Oh, as for the antiquity, that's undeniable [DYER *and* ROBINSON *are bringing the men's coats, which are being put on.*]

CHARLES. Oh, but we must not look a gift horse in the mouth, nor a lady's age in the parish register. You will think us very early people, Mr. Elliston, but there's a treadmill called the East India House demands my presence at eight of a morning.

ELLISTON. At eight? You really start your day so soon?

CHARLES. Well, if by chance I don't, I make up for arriving late by leaving early. Sometimes I dream of a happy time when I shall finish with the India House. No more commercial noises nor a quill that would be writing letters and must glide into figures and names of gourds, cassia, tea, aloes, ginger. What a list for a man that fancies he's an author! Lord, to be free of that damned office!

DYER. So you will be, Charles.

CHARLES. Yes, when I'm old, if brandy and tobacco leave me alive to see the day. What would you say to me if I told you I'd resolved to exclude all spirituous liquors from my house for ever from today?

DYER [*solemnly*]. I should applaud.

CHARLES. You'd applaud anything. You applauded "Mr. H." But I should die, and you would still be Dyer and so would my puns as well. No, George, I'll retire to the country and go and hobnob with Wordsworth and Coleridge in Cumberland.

RICKMAN. The lakes would be the water-cure with a vengeance, Charles.

DYER. They say the new water-cure is very wonderful.

CHARLES. Neither new nor wonderful. It's at least as old as the Flood, when in my opinion it killed more than it cured, and it shall never have the chance of killing me.

DYER. But will you really go to Cumberland?

CHARLES. I won't. Ain't I as airy up four pair of stairs as in the country, and in the midst of London, whose dirtiest drab-frequented alley and her lowest bowing tradesman I would not exchange for Skiddaw and Helvellyn with Southey and Wordsworth thrown into the bargain. Let them talk of lakes and mountains and romantic dales. Give me a ramble in the winter nights in London, the lamps lit, the pavements of the motley Strand crowded with passengers. Give me the old bookstalls of London, a walk in the bright piazzas of Covent Garden, streets, streets, streets, print shops, toy shops, mercers, pastrycooks, St. Paul's Churchyard, the Strand, Exeter 'Change, Charing Cross—these are thy gods, oh, London! —But, good Lord, Mr. Elliston, what must you think of me? My older friends know I'm a stuttering buffoon, but you—

ROBINSON. Charles! Charles!

CHARLES. Devil take it, Crabb, you know I only chatter when I'm drunk. And, by the Lord, I must be very drunk tonight. I swear I'll change my habits and grow sober for variety.

ELLISTON. Mr. Lamb, I have to thank you for three things tonight. I have enacted "Mr. H.," I have experienced Mrs. Battle, and I have heard you talk. The last, sir, is the greatest. [*The women re-enter up L.*]

CHARLES. That's because I stutter and it makes my conversation twice its length. [MARY *walks to door, R., with* MISS MELLON. MISS MELLON *stops by* CHARLES. MARY *goes to open door.* ROBINSON *anticipates her and opens it.*]

MISS MELLON. Good night, Mr. Lamb. I ought to be angry with you for not allowing me to act Melesinda again.

CHARLES. Madam, the part's unworthy of you, but I shall always take a pride in thinking that the beautiful Miss Mellon

acted in a play of mine. [*She passes out.* MARY *follows her.* ELLISTON *goes out.* MRS. RICKMAN *comes to* CHARLES.] Mrs. Rickman, shall I ever be forgiven?

MRS. RICKMAN. Forgiven, Mr. Lamb? And, pray, for what?

CHARLES. For sitting here adream when there was supper which your dainty fingers had laid.

MRS. RICKMAN. Mr. Lamb, I'll tell you a secret.

CHARLES. Yes?

MRS. RICKMAN. There's roast pig left. Good night.

CHARLES. You blessed woman! [*Exeunt* RICKMAN *and* MRS. RICKMAN.]

MRS. BATTLE. Mr. Lamb, never invite me again to play whist with a man who trumps his partner's ace. Good night.

CHARLES. Good night, Mrs. Battle. [*She goes out.* DYER *follows her. Sounds of "good nights" from stairs.*] Crabb, I'm no hand at all at making pretty speeches to women. These partings irk me.

ROBINSON. Then I'll cut mine short.

CHARLES. You? Women, I said. A man will shake a hand, and there it's done.

ROBINSON. Let's do it, then. [*They shake.*] All's said in that, Charles.

CHARLES. Crabb, you're no true-hearted Crabb at all, but pure golden pippin. [MARY *re-enters, R.*]

ROBINSON. Good night, Mary. God bless you both.

MARY. Good night, Crabb; you've been a tower of strength.

ROBINSON. It was no tower of Babel, then, for I've hardly spoken a word all night.

CHARLES. Much chance you get when I'm about. [*Exit, R.,* ROBINSON. CHARLES *closes door.* MARY *meets him, C.*]

MARY. Oh, Charles, I'm so cast down.

CHARLES. Nonsense, Mary. We've had our fun. We've swaggered it at Drury Lane, and had our name upon the bills.

MARY. For one night.

CHARLES. The shorter the lesson, the sweeter; and I've

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learnt I'm not a dramatist. We set our hopes too high. "Mr. H." was a flimsy foundation for our castles in Spain.

MARY. I loved to build them, Charles.

CHARLES [*leading her to chair by fire and taking the other*]. We'll build again. A farce that's foiled don't make a tragedy and it don't persuade me I'm not a bit of a genius, either.

MARY. You're full of hope.

CHARLES. Of course I am. Hope is a lively blue-eyed wench and I am always glad of her company. What's there to fear, Mary? Aren't our "Tales from Shakespeare" coming out in a month?

MARY. Yes.

CHARLES. Then what's the failure of a farce to us? You're near as bad as George. I threatened him just now I'd retire to the country and go to study nature with Wordsworth. You should have seen his face!

MARY. You'll not do that.

CHARLES. Not I. I have a mind that loves to be at home in crowds. I know I've cursed our nocturnal knock-eternal visitors, but I'd be lost without 'em. After all, the wind is tempered to the shorn lambs. We have our friends, good loyal friends, and we have each other, Mary.

MARY. Sitting together irritating one another like tooth-ache and his friend gumboil. [*She rises and goes up L. with candle.*]

CHARLES [*rising*]. Eh? Mary, I tell the lies in this house, but I'll tell the truth this time. I am a fool without you. You are older, wiser, and better than I am. Nothing can tell, nothing could ever pay

> The mighty debt of love I owe,
> Mary, to thee, my sister and my friend.

MARY [*returning*]. Good night, Charles. [*They kiss.*]

CHARLES. Good night. [*She turns up L. again. He pours out gin. At the L. door she turns.*]

MARY. Charles!

CHARLES. Yes, Mary, I know. I swear I'm going to give up drinking—after tomorrow. [*She shakes her head indulgently.* CHARLES *drinks. He eyes his pipe. He is tempted and falls. He is filling the pipe as the curtain drops.*]

[CURTAIN.]

BOOKS AND ARTICLES HELPFUL IN THE STUDY OF "THE NIGHT OF 'MR. H.'"

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* Alice Brown: *Charles Lamb. A Play.* New York, 1924.

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* E. V. Lucas: *The Life of Charles Lamb.* New York and London, 1907.

B. E. Martin: *In the Footprints of Charles Lamb.* New York, 1894.

Brander Matthews: *The Dramatic Essays of Charles Lamb.* London, 1891.

Alwin Thaler: *Shakespeare to Sheridan.* Cambridge, 1922.

NOTE. For biographical data on Mr. Brighouse, the introduction to his *Maid of France* (Cohen's *One-Act Plays by Modern Authors*) and the introduction to his *Followers* (Cohen's *The Junior Play Book*) may be consulted.

* For high school reference.

PLAYS BY HAROLD BRIGHOUSE

1909. *The Doorway* (one act).
1909. *Dealing in Futures.*
1911. *The Polygon.*
1911. *Lonesome Like* (one act).
1911. *Spring in Bloomsbury* (one act).
1911. *The Price of Coal* (one act).
1912. *The Oak Settle* (one act).
1912. *The Odd Man Out* (three acts).
1912. *Little Red Shoes.*
1913. *The Game* (three acts).
1914. *Garside's Career* (four acts).
1914. *The Northerners* (four acts).
1915. *The Road to Raebury.*
1915. *Followers* (one act).
1915. *The Hillarys* (with Stanley Houghton).
1915. *Converts* (one act).
1916. *Hobson's Choice* (three acts).
1916. *The Clock Goes Round.*
1916. *Zack.*
1918. *Maid of France* (one act).
1919. *The Bantam V. C.*
1920. *Other Times.*
1924. *Mary's John.*
May Pole Morning (one act).*
The Paris Doctor (one act).*
The Prince Who Was a Piper (one act).*
The Man About the Place (one act).*
The Scaring Off of Teddy Dawson (one act).
1926. *Open Air Plays.*

* *Plays for the Meadow and Plays for the Lawn,* New York, 1921.

THE LAST OF THE LOWRIES[1]

A Play of the Croatan Outlaws of Robeson County, North Carolina

By

PAUL GREEN

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INTRODUCTION

THE LAST OF THE LOWRIES

The Last of the Lowries, by Paul Green, of the University of North Carolina, has a special interest for several reasons. It is, in the same sense as *Riders to the Sea* or *Spreading the News* or, indeed, almost any of the Abbey Theatre plays, an example of folk drama. Such drama has its roots in the life of the simple and the unsophisticated and draws its inspiration from local traditions. *The Last of the Lowries* is significant also as a phase of the stirring intellectual activity of the new South. It illustrates the tendency of playwrights like Hatcher Hughes and Lulu Vollmer to present in the theatre the drama of native communities, primitive and remote. Percy MacKaye, an observer of Kentucky folk ways, has used material of similar simplicity in his play *This Fine Pretty World.*

Paul Green's work is important likewise as evidence of the achievements in a special field of one of the most notable of Southern educational institutions, the University of North Carolina, at which he was graduated and at which he now teaches philosophy. A former member of Professor Frederick H. Koch's Carolina Playmakers, Mr. Green has given proof in his contributions to the First Series and to the Second Series of *Carolina Plays* and in the two volumes of his own plays, *The Lord's Will* and *Lonesome Road,* that stimulating teaching may develop latent creative literary abilities to the point of expression. Under Professor Koch's instruction, Paul

Green and a group, constantly growing in numbers, have, singly and in collaboration, produced vital dramatic episodes richly colored by the locality from which they spring.

Paul Green is himself a North Carolina man, born near Lillington in that state on March 17, 1894. In familiar American fashion he worked on the land in spring and summer and got his schooling in the winter. Two seasons of teaching in a rural school preceded his enrolment at the University of North Carolina in 1916. After an interruption of two years (1917-1919), caused by his war service, he resumed his studies at the university. In 1921 he received his degree. Graduate work at the same college and at Cornell University followed. Since 1920 he has written in the neighborhood of thirty one-act plays and four long plays.

The Last of the Lowries, composed in 1919, was the first of his plays to be produced by the Carolina Playmakers, the organization founded by Professor Koch, which inaugurated its public performances in March, 1919. Frederick Koch had gone to Chapel Hill from the University of North Dakota, where he assembled the Dakota Playmakers as early as 1906 in connection with course work in dramatic composition. In the West Professor Koch's students had found in the vagrant life of casual labor, in the vestiges of pioneer society, in the heterogeneous inheritance from various European folk stocks represented in the district, material for a folk drama, especially appealing in its own locality, but by no means exclusively local in its appeal.

The new field in North Carolina in which Professor Koch came to labor was of entirely different soil. The region from which his students now were drawn had been settled by English emigrants in the eighteenth century.

Their direct descendants still preserve, especially in the mountainous districts and in the back country, a number of old English customs and obsolete turns of speech, and continue to sing and mime ballads. A good example of the utilization of this heritage of tradition is the tragedy of mountain folk, produced in November, 1925, at the dedication of the Playmakers' Theatre. This play, by Martha Boswell, called *Yon Side of Sunk Creek,* preserves "the spirit of *The Lexington Murder,* which runs through it not unlike the chorus of a Greek tragedy." Professor Koch has written a spirited account of how he and Miss Boswell encountered this ballad in the Carolina mountains:

> One day I was in a little cabin on Cedar Mountain. And I heard old Mrs. Warren sing, while the little girl played the reed organ. She sang the famous ballad of "The Lexington Murder"—a song that tells its own dramatic story of a heroic people. . . . Zero [the son of the house] got down his banjo and began picking the strings. He set all our feet going as he picked. And he sang some of the old songs, the mountain ballads—some of them going back to the England of his forefathers—to Chaucer.
>
> Then my friend, Martha Boswell . . . suggested, "Zee, now sing some of your own songs, that you make up as you go along. . . ." Zee picked the banjo and sang the song of his own life. And he *acted* it as he sang.[1]

In the catalogue of the university Professor Koch describes his work in English 31—now almost as famous as the English 47 of Professor Baker's pre-Yale days—as "a practical course in the writing of original plays. Emphasis is placed on the materials of tradition and folk-

[1] Frederick H. Koch, "Folk-Play Making in Dakota and Carolina," *The Playground,* Vol. XVIII, pp. 600-601, New York, 1925.

lore, and of present-day life. The essentials of stage-craft are illustrated in the production, by Carolina Playmakers, of selected plays written in the course." Professor Koch, it is understood, makes no attempt to lay down definite formulæ or to impart a rigid technique. No textbook is used. The germ idea of the plays is found in the social background or geographical environment of the student playwright; a scenario is worked up and given the benefit of class criticism; dialogue is invented and submitted to the same test; the whole is worked and re-worked until a finished production is approved. The most successful and practicable of the plays built in this way are given before Southern audiences in the course of the periodical tours, undertaken by Professor Koch's students and staff, through North Carolina and several neighboring states. The most recent statement of the Playmakers' purpose runs thus: " To give to the people—in the mountains, on the plain, and by the sea—a means of expressing in simple folk-plays their rich store of legends and history, of tales and songs heard in the villages and in the country everywhere, and of the dramatic happenings all about us today."

By November, 1925, when the Playmakers' Theatre was dedicated, the group had produced forty-two of their Carolina plays, representing thirty different authors. The trustees of the University of North Carolina have recognized the importance of Professor Koch's classes in their dedication of one of the old college buildings to his work. Smith Hall, once the University Library, has been remodeled as a theatre, to which the Carnegie Foundation has contributed the necessary equipment.

Significant as Professor Koch's highly specialized courses in the drama are in themselves, they become even more interesting when they are considered in connection

with similar work that is being done all over the country now in colleges and in schools. For this widespread interest in dramatic composition, pioneers like George Pierce Baker and Frederick H. Koch are no doubt largely responsible. The publicity which their work has received and the success of their students have emphasized the importance of the drama in education and the drama as an expression of community aspirations and art. The names of many leaders stand out in this movement. At the University of Washington there is Glenn Hughes; at the University of Iowa there is E. C. Mabie. Though the vogue of motion pictures has killed road companies, and drama, commercially produced, is moribund outside the zone of big cities, it seems quite possible that this creative activity in colleges and high schools, taken in conjunction with the experiments of Little Theatre groups, may lead to a widespread and popular revival of interest in the drama, and to the foundation in unnumbered smaller communities of a real communal drama.

Paul Green, now a figure of importance in American drama, began his playmaking under Professor Koch's instruction. *The Last of the Lowries,* for all its superficial resemblance to *Riders to the Sea,* had its origin in native tradition. Paul Green, in his apprentice stage, did use models. In his appreciation of the dramatic uses of irony he is not far behind Hardy. Synge and O'Neill have undoubtedly been strong influences. Green's *Aunt Mahaly's Cabin* owes much to certain features of O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones.* Green's *No 'Count Boy,* with which The Dallas Little Theatre won the cup in the National Little Theatre Tournament in 1925, has certain strong affinities with Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World.*

The Last of the Lowries has an historical background.

The document on which Paul Green drew is the narrative by Mary C. Norment in *The Lowrie History* (*Daily Journal Print,* Wilmington, N. C., 1875). The Lowrie outlaws, of mixed blood, are popularly supposed to be descended from the few survivors of Raleigh's "Lost Colony," who intermarried with the Croatan Indians. The habitat of the Croatans is Scuffletown Swamp, Robeson County, North Carolina. Their outlawry was part of the aftermath of the Civil War. The Lowries were among the Croatans defying the Confederate government when it sought to conscript them for work on a certain fortification. They killed an officer sent out to bring them in. Then they retired to Scuffletown Swamp, the nucleus of a gang of marauders. In 1874 the last of the Lowries, Steve (not Henry Berry as in Paul Green's play), was shot down.

A second play based on the history of these same outlaws [2] was written more recently (1924) by another one of Professor Koch's students, William Norment Cox, of Robeson County, North Carolina, whose own family was active in the extermination of the Lowries. His *Scuffletown Outlaws* is, according to Frederick H. Koch, "a thing of elemental power and strange beauty—a remarkable first play."

Paul Green has given new proofs of his ability as a playwright since he wrote *The Last of the Lowries.* Like the pioneers Ridgeley Torrence and Eugene O'Neill, he is interested in the creation of a negro theatre. In regard to his latest volume, *Lonesome Road,* he says: "A first

[2] "The typical Croatan of 1874 spoke with a peculiar drawl in his voice, most often pronouncing his *t* like *d,* as 'better,' *bedder; c* or *ck* was pronounced like *g,* as 'back,' *bag;* short *a* like short *o,* as 'man,' *mon.* Sometimes *g* was sounded as *d,* as 'loving,' *lovind.* Even now there is little change in the dialect of the uneducated Croatans."—F. H. Koch, *Carolina Folk Plays,* New York, 1922, p. xxviii.

effort is made to say something of what these people more recently have suffered and thought and done. For it seems apparent now that such things are worthy of record." This collection of plays takes its name from these plaintive lines in a negro song,

> Look down, look down dat lonesome road
> Whah me and my pardner's got to go. . . .

Paul Green's negro plays are interpenetrated with the primitive wildness, the releasing rhythm, the tropical imagination, and the unrestrained humor characteristic of negro art. To the specific folk contributions of the negro, the spirituals, the folk tales, the dance, and the secular music of the "blues," is now added a theatre. Paul Green has made himself a sensitive instrument for the transmission of the beauty inherent in the drama of negro life.

The Last of the Lowries is the work, then, of a man who is to be credited with definite achievements in the theatre, but whose work holds promise, too, of the further successful development of at least two types of folk drama. Paul Green's connection with the Carolina Playmakers and his participation in their community projects illustrate one of the most interesting phases of American education.

CHARACTERS

As originally produced at The Play-House, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, April 30 and May 1, 1920.

CUMBA LOWRIE, *the aged mother of the Lowries,*
Elizabeth Taylor
JANE, *her daughter,* Ruth Penny
MAYNO, *Cumba's daughter-in-law,* Rachel Freeman
HENRY BERRY LOWRIE, *last of the outlaw gang,*
Ernest Nieman

SCENE: *The rough home of the Lowrie gang in Scuffletown, a swampy region of Robeson County, North Carolina.*
TIME: *A night in the winter of the year 1874.*

THE LAST OF THE LOWRIES

SCENE.—*The kitchen of the Lowrie home.*

The interior is that of a rude dwelling built of rough-hewn timbers. At the right front is a fireplace in which a fire is burning. Pots and pans are hung around the fireplace. A rocking chair is drawn up in front of the fire. At the right rear is a cupboard. At the center rear a door leads outside. Above it are several fishing poles and a net resting on pegs fitted into the joists. To the rear at the left is a loom with a piece of half-finished cloth in it. A door in the center of the left wall leads into an adjoining room. To the right of it is a window. At the front on that side is a chest. In the center of the room is a rough, oblong eating-table and several homemade chairs with cowhide bottoms. A spinning-wheel stands at the front left. On the table is an unlighted candle in a tin holder.

The play opens with MAYNO LOWRIE *spinning at the wheel. She stops, folds her hands aimlessly across her lap, and stares idly into the fire. She is a full-blooded Croatan, about twenty-five years old, of medium height, with skin a tan color, almost copper, prominent cheek bones, short flat nose, and black shifty eyes. Her coarse raven hair is wound into a knot at the back of her head. She is dressed in a polka-dot calico. Her shoes are somewhat heavy but comfortable-looking. Around her neck she wears a string of shiny glass beads. Several cheap rings adorn her hands.*

For a moment she sits idle, and then begins to spin lazily, at almost every revolution of the wheel stopping to glance at the rear door, then at the door to the left, as if expecting someone to enter. She listens. From afar

off comes the lone hoot of an owl. She shakes her head and starts the wheel going again. Then she goes to the fireplace, turns the bread in the spider, and with a long-handled spoon stirs the peas in the pot. After this she goes back to her chair at the wheel.

Three knocks are heard at the rear door. MAYNO *hurries to remove the bar.* JANE LOWRIE *enters with a bundle under her arm. She throws the bundle on the table, takes off her bonnet and cape, and hangs them on a peg near the door at the left.* MAYNO *goes to the bundle, stares at it half curiously and fearfully.* JANE *comes to the fire without speaking. She is a tall Croatan girl, dressed more plainly than* MAYNO *in a dress of homespun, with no ornaments. Her shoes are covered with mud. She is about twenty years old, with heavy black hair, light tan-colored skin, and regular features. Her face is more open and intelligent than* MAYNO'S. *Her whole figure expresses weariness. She looks anxiously at the door of the adjoining room, then turns to* MAYNO.

JANE. Has she asked for me?

MAYNO. Not but once. I tol' her you'd stepped over to Pate's for a little flour, and she seemed to pearten up at that. Said mebbe they'd be a letter from the boys 'way yander. [*She smiles scornfully. Still standing at the table, she looks at the package.* CUMBA'S *voice is heard calling from the room at the left.*]

CUMBA. Jane, Jane, is that ye?

JANE [*going to the door at the left*]. Yes, muh, I'm jes' back from Pate's with the flour.

CUMBA. All right, honey. [JANE *goes into the room. Their voices can be heard indistinctly.* MAYNO *looks at the package, reaches and touches it. Then she tears a hole in the paper, peers at it intently and draws away.* JANE *comes back.*]

JANE. Mayno, they're . . . his'n!

MAYNO. Whose? . . . Yes, they must be his'n.

JANE [*lighting a candle and placing it on the table*]. Yes, Mayno, they's Steve's all right.

MAYNO. How'd you git 'em, chile?

JANE. I got 'em from the sheriff.

MAYNO. And I thought you were goin' to see Henry Berry 'bout Steve's money and find where they put 'im. [*She opens the package and takes out a coat, a pair of trousers, and a black felt hat. The garments are slashed and stiff with blood.*]

JANE. I did—two hours proguing down through the black swamps an' the bramble br'ars, and when I foun' Henry Berry he said them sher'ffs what killed Steve got his money, and as for where they put 'im, nobody knows. [CUMBA *is heard groaning as she turns in her bed.* JANE *lowers her voice.*] And then I went to the sheriff for his clothes. I knowed that some day when she [*nodding to the room at the left*] finds it out she'll be wantin' his clothes, them she made with her own hands like th' others. And the sheriff wouldn't tell me where they buried 'im.

MAYNO. Took his money, did they? That's the way with them white folks. They do all they kin agin' us poor Croatans, 'cause we's jes' injuns, they says—though we knows better.

JANE. They don't hold nothin' agin' us; hit's agin' the boys.

MAYNO. They killed yo' daddy and William and Tom and Steve for being robbers and cut-throats and they robbers and cut-throats theyselves. [*Fiercely.*] And me needing new dresses and the like. But they's one left they won't git, the last an' best of 'em all. The day they lays Henry Berry cold they'll be more of 'em got than has been.

JANE [*wearily*]. Hush, Mayno; with your jawing you'd wake the dead. She'll hear you.

MAYNO [*throwing down the clothes and coming to the fire*]. Well, why you want to keep pushing trouble from her? What's the good o' it? She'll find it out somehow. She's suffered now 'til you cain't hurt her no more. And ain't I suffered too, with my man dead on me? What call has she got to . . .

JANE. No, we ain't a-goin' to tell her now. She ain't got much longer, and let her keep on b'lieving Steve and Henry Berry's safe in Georgy. No, they ain't no use o' letting her on to it now. [JANE *sits at the spinning-wheel.*]

MAYNO [*vehemently*]. Ain't Henry Berry going to *try* to git them sher'ffs back for killing Steve? If I's a outlaw like him I'd a done paid 'em. And he'll pay 'em, too! He's the best o' the Lowries and he'll 'venge them that's been murdered in cold blood like Steve and the rest.

JANE. No, Mayno, he won't nuther. His time's drawin' nigh. He knows it. They're settin' for him everywhere. They's men watchin' this house tonight. I seen it in his face today that he's layin' down. He was wrong from the first. He knows it now.

MAYNO. What's that!

JANE. Yes, he's a-quittin', but if them sheriffs hadn't agged him on ten years ago when he wanted to quit and be quiet he'd a been livin' in peace here tonight. But it's too late now. Too many men's been killed. And he's putting up his guns at the last. They'll git him 'fore many days. . . . He tol' me so.

MAYNO. You're a-lyin', gal. You know he's goin' to scorch 'em with his spite and bring 'em down for Steve, him as was the strappingest man o' the gang. It ain't his way to be a-backing down and not pay 'em.

JANE. No, he ain't. He's a-puttin' it by, I tell you. They'll ketch him 'fore long.

MAYNO. Then what you goin' to do 'bout her in there? You cain't keep on a-foolin' her forever with your letters and money and mess from Georgy.

JANE. Well, we c'n fool 'er till she gits better, cain't we? And if she don't git better, then she'll go out happier, won't she . . . believin' Steve and Henry Berry's safe and livin' as they ought [*she rises and goes to the cupboard*]—she so old and fearful at the door hinge skreaking even and the red rooster crowing 'fore the glim o' dawn, you know, Mayno. [*She brings some butter and the molasses pot from the cupboard, takes the spider from the fire and puts supper on the table.*]

MAYNO. Well, go on if you will, but you cain't keep it up

much longer. It'll be jes' like I said. Henry Berry'll come broozin' around some night. Sposen so?

JANE [*frightened*]. You reckon he'd do that. . . . No, he couldn't. I tol' him about how it was with her, and besides he knows the house is watched.

MAYNO [*shaking her head*]. I dunno. He mought. You know the time he slipped through a whole passel o' them sher'ffs jes' to come here and git a shirt she'd made 'im? And by this time he must be a-wantin' to see her powerful bad.

JANE [*terrified*]. You reckon he will? No, he won't! He couldn't do that. [*Old* CUMBA *is heard calling* JANE.] Put them things in the sack with th' others, Mayno, and put 'em in the bottom, too. You c'n be fixin' her supper while I ten' to 'er. [*She goes into the rear room.* MAYNO *takes up the clothes, opens the chest at the left, pulls out a bulky burlap sack and crams the trousers, shirt and hat into it. Shutting the chest, she goes to the cupboard, takes out three plates and some knives and forks and lays them on the table. Then she begins preparing* CUMBA'S *supper on a plate.* JANE *comes to the door and speaks.*] You needn't bring her supper in here, Mayno, she's going to git up, she says. [JANE *goes back into the room.* MAYNO *shrugs her shoulders, sits down and begins to eat.* JANE *comes in supporting old* CUMBA. *She speaks to* MAYNO.] Fix her chair by the fire, Mayno.

MAYNO [*rising reluctantly from the table*]. Gimme time, cain't you? [*She pulls* CUMBA'S *chair nearer to the fire.* CUMBA *is a bent, emaciated old woman, about seventy years of age. Her face is scarred with suffering. She is a mixture of Negro and Portuguese, somewhat darker than* JANE. *She is feeble and shakes with palsy.*]

CUMBA [*pausing, as* JANE *leads her to the fire*]. Did you say they warn't nary letter from the boys 'way out thar?

JANE [*looking at* MAYNO *as she settles* CUMBA *in her chair*]. No'm, there warn't no letter this time, but they'll be one soon. You see they cain't write often, not yit. They mought be ketched on account of it. 'Tain't quite time for another'n yit.

CUMBA. Mebbe so, mebbe so. But I thought they mought 'a been one. How long is it they been out thar, chile?

JANE [*placing the plate of food on her lap*]. Two months now, muh. And they's livin' straight and 'spectable, too. And 'twon't be long 'fore the big Governor'll pardon 'em, and they'll come back to you, and you'll be happy agin, you will that.

CUMBA [*brightening*]. And I'll be at the loom then, a-weavin' 'em the good shirts, won't I? And they'll be working in the fields and comin' home to a good dinner, won't they? And at night Henry Berry'll be a-playin' of his banjo like old times, won't he? [*She stops suddenly. All the brightness goes out of her face. She lets her knife fall to her plate.*] But they won't be but two of 'em, will there, Janie? Jes' two. When thar was Allen, my old man—they shot 'im over thar in the corner. [*She turns and points.*] They's a blood spot thar now. Then thar was Willie and Tom. And they ain't no tellin' how they put 'em away, chile . . . chile . . .

JANE. Now, muh, you mustn't do that!—Eat your supper. You got to git well, time Steve and Henry Berry gits back. They's allus grief with the children going, but you still got two of the boys and me. [JANE *butters a piece of bread and hands it to her.*]

CUMBA. Mebbe so, mebbe so, chile. But . . . [*She stops.*] Whar's that letter that come from the boys last month? I wants it read agin.

JANE. But, muh, you got to eat. I'll read it after while. Let me fry you a egg. [MAYNO *leaves the table and begins spinning at the wheel.*]

CUMBA. I ain't hongry, chile. Take them thar rations and put 'em back and read me the letter. It's enough to hear it . . . hearin' that the last of my boys is safe and ca'm and livin' once more as I'd lak 'em to.

JANE. Well, I'll git it then. [*She goes, searches in the cupboard, and at last draws out a greasy envelope. From this she takes a sheet of paper and comes back to old* CUMBA.]

CUMBA. Read it, honey. It's the blessin' of the Lord that

I's spared to learn that two o' my boys is shet of sin. But they's been a heap o' blood spilt, chile, a heap o' blood spilt . . . but they's been more tears spilt by they ol' mammy, too, and mebbe at last they'll ketch a chance to come back to her. Read it, chile.

JANE [*glancing at* MAYNO *and then looking at the letter*]. They says they's a-gitting along well and makin' money an' . . .

CUMBA. Don't read it like that. Read what they says!

JANE. Well, I'll read it then. [*She reads.*]

" Dear Mammy:

" We writes to let you know we're in Georgy at last, safe an' sound. We're both workin' in a store an' makin' good money. They ain't nobody knows what we done back there, an' the people is good to us. 'Twon't be long 'fore the Governor'll pardon us, and we can come back and take care o' you.

" Your loving sons,

" Steve and Henry Berry."

CUMBA. You left out somethin', chile. Don't you know they sent some money with the letter and they spoke about it.

JANE [*confused*]. Yes'm, that's right. I forgot it. It's on the other side, mammy. Yes'm, here it is. It says, " We're sendin' you twenty dollars to buy meat and flour with."

CUMBA. Good boys they is, they ain't never meant no harm. Willie and Tom was jes' that-a-way. Every cent they used to make a-hoein' cotton 'roun' they'd give it to they ol' mammy, an' the good Lord knows whar they's sleepin' to-night . . . but they's two spared me an' I hadn't ought to complain, I reckon. Is the money all gone, Janie?

JANE. No'm, there's some left yit, and they'll be sending more in the next letter. [*She puts the letter back into the cupboard and begins cleaning up the dishes. Old* CUMBA *leans back in her chair, gazing into the fire. The hooting of an owl is heard. She stirs uneasily in her chair.* MAYNO *and* JANE *stop their work and listen. They both look at each other and*

then glance at old CUMBA, *who is trembling and gripping the arms of her chair.* JANE *begins to rattle the dishes.* MAYNO *spins rapidly.*]

CUMBA [*turning to* JANE]. Ain't that a owl squeechin', Jane?

JANE [*looking at* MAYNO]. What? . . . I . . . I don't hear nothin'. [*The hooting is heard again.*]

CUMBA. Ain't that it agin?

MAYNO. Aw, it's nothin' but that ol' swamp owl. He hollers 'most every night. Don't take on 'bout it. [*She shivers and stirs the fire.*]

CUMBA [*shrilly*]. It sounds like some o' my boys a-makin' o' they signals down thar in the night; but 'tain't them though. The only two that's left is a long ways off, and mebbe won't never come back.

JANE. Now, they will too.

CUMBA. 'Way back yonder I loved to see 'em 'round me here, the warm fire a-burnin' and Allen thar a-working at his gear, and them that was little uns then a-playing on the floor. I didn't mind it them times. [*Her voice grows shriller.*] And now where are they? My ol' man and all the house gone from me.

MAYNO. Aw, Ma Lowrie, what's the use of all them carrying-ons? You reckon you're the only one that's had trouble in this world?

CUMBA. And when the rain and the wind come raring down and the cypress trees is moanin' in the dark and the owls a-honing through the night, I think on them three lyin' dead thar in the woods and the water washin' over them, and me with nothin' but their clothes to remember on and show for them I was prided for. [*Again the hooting of the owl is heard.* JANE *leaves the dishes suddenly and comes to the fire, lays more wood on, furtively wiping the tears from her eyes.* CUMBA *still looks in the fire.*]

JANE. It's time for you to lay down now.

CUMBA [*without noticing her*]. At times in the dark night I dream on 'em and they ain't nothin' happened and it's all

like it used to be, and then I wake a-callin', and they don't answer, for they're sleepin' out naked in the cold.

MAYNO [*shrugging her shoulders*]. Jes' listen at her!—Ma Lowrie, cain't you be quiet a bit? [*Lowering her voice.*] Lord, you're as techous as a' old hen!

JANE [*half sobbing*]. What makes you carry on like that? It cain't do no good. Ain't Henry Berry tol' you a hundred times that he's buried all three of 'em down thar in the swamp? And he's skeered to tell the place for fear them sher'ffs'll dig 'em up and git the money for 'em. Don't take on so. They's put away with praying, and you'd better lie down now. [*She looks at* MAYNO.]

CUMBA. Yes, they mought be buried in the swamp down thar, and when it rains the river rises and washes over 'em, them that used to pull at my dress when I was at the wash—But Old Master sends the sun and the rain, and the Book says we ought to be satisfied. [*The owl's hoot is heard again.* CUMBA *looks at the door and shivers.*] Help me in now, chile. I didn't meant to say all that, but I'm done. An ol' woman's heart is a foolish thing . . . a foolish thing. . . . [JANE *helps her into the room at the left. A moment later she reappears. She looks at* MAYNO *inquisitively.*]

MAYNO. Sounded like Henry Berry's hootin', didn't it?

JANE. Yes, I'm afraid it's him, after all I tol' him. Oh, what makes him do it? But it's like I said. He's givin' in now, he's quittin' at the last. And he's set on seein' her once more or it's some of his quair notions, somethin' he's wrapped up in gittin'. [*Three knocks are heard at the door.* JANE *runs and lifts the heavy bar, and* HENRY BERRY LOWRIE *walks in.*]

MAYNO. Henry Berry! [*He starts to speak, but* JANE *lays her finger on her lips and leads him towards the fire. He takes off his hat and bows wearily to* MAYNO. *He is a man of handsome personal appearance. The color of his skin is a mixed white and yellowish brown, almost copper-colored. Just below his left eye is a crescent-shaped scar. Despite the look of weariness, his countenance is expressive in a high degree of firmness and courage. His forehead is broad and high, his*

eyes large and keen, his hair thick and inclined to curl. He wears a black beard. From appearances he is about twenty-six years of age, a little above medium height, well-knit, broad-shouldered, and well-proportioned throughout. He wears a broad, black felt hat, brown corduroy coat, dark woolen trousers, and calfskin boots. In a belt around his waist he carries two pistols. From this belt a strap passes upward and supports a repeating rifle behind. He also carries a long-bladed knife stuck in his belt. He takes a seat at the fire, putting his rifle in the corner, but retaining his other arms. JANE *runs to the door at the rear and makes sure that it is closed tight. Then she hurries to* HENRY BERRY.]

JANE. Brother, what made you do it! The house is watched an' . . .

HENRY BERRY. I know it, Sis, but I had to come. I'm quittin' . . . tonight. Is she asleep? [*He jerks his head towards the room at the left.*]

JANE. No, I've jes' helped her in. That's the reason we couldn't make no sign with the light.

HENRY BERRY. I couldn't figure what the trouble was. I hooted 'til my head hurt. But I was goin' to risk it anyhow.

JANE. What'll she think if she sees you! Oh, hurry and go away!

HENRY BERRY. Naw, I got to see her. After tonight 'twon't matter. Bring me a bite to eat, Sis. How is she?

MAYNO. I reckon she's on the mend. . . .

JANE [*frightened*]. Will they git you tonight? What do you mean by sich talk?

HENRY BERRY. Never mind. They'll git me . . . when I'm dead, all right, no doubt o' that. I'm taking the gear off at last. The ol' man's gone, Willie and Tom's gone, and they got Steve last week, and I'm the last o' the gang. I'm tired, damned tired of it all, Sis.

JANE. But I tell you, you cain't give up like that. You got to keep on fightin' till you git a chance to git away!

HENRY BERRY. Naw, it's too late now. If they'd 'a' let me, I'd 'a' lived straight, but after the first trouble I had to

keep killin' to live. Well, I'm done killin', now . . . 'cept one man, and they ain't no use of you knowin' who it is. You'll know soon enough. One man can't stand it allus, and they'll scrush him at the last. [JANE *sits in her chair weeping softly.* HENRY BERRY *lays his hand gently on her head. Trying to appear cheerful, he turns to* MAYNO.] Mayno, bring me a bite to eat. [*He sits at the table, facing the front.* MAYNO *gets a plate of food and puts it before him. He eats hungrily.*]

MAYNO. Whar'd they put 'im, Henry Berry?

HENRY BERRY. I ain't been able to find out, Mayno. Piled him in some of their rotten graveyards, I reckon, when he loved to run the woods with th' other wild things like him.

MAYNO. What'd they do with his money?

HENRY BERRY. I dunno. Got that, too, I reckon. But you needn't to worry. Jane! [JANE *looks up.*] Here, I've fixed for you-all. Here's money enough to last you three after I'm gone. [*He stops eating and pulls a bag of money out of his pocket.*]

JANE. But, Brother . . .

HENRY BERRY. Never mind, take it and take care o' her. It's the last thing I c'n do for her and you.

JANE. But she won't use it, knowin' how you come by it.

HENRY BERRY. She won't?

JANE. No, she won't. She'll starve first, and you know it. You know all them fixin's you sent her. She give 'em all away, the stove and the stool with three legs and everything. And when she thought you and Steve was livin' straight in Georgy, she give away that gold chain you brung her. She's feared you hadn't got it honest.

HENRY BERRY [*softly*]. Yes, yes, she's allus been too good fer us. [*He leaves the table and takes a seat near the fire.*] Still that chain was bought honest. . . . But you three's got to live, ain't ye? Take that money, and don't tell 'er. [JANE *puts the money in the chest.*] Mayno, is my ol' banjo still here?

MAYNO. Yeah, in thar.

HENRY BERRY. I been wantin' to knock her a little for a

long time. And I want to knock her a little the las' night.

JANE. The las' night! It ain't the las' night! If you'd go now you'd git away. Why do you talk like that? [*She is interrupted by a loud cry. Old* CUMBA *stands in the door at the rear.*]

CUMBA. It's you, it's you, Henry Berry! Come back from Georgy. I knowed you'd come. I knowed. . . . [*She totters to* HENRY BERRY *and throws her arms around him. He kisses her on the forehead. Her look is one of unmingled joy. Suddenly the hurt look comes back into her face.*] Why you come back a-wearin' of your guns?

HENRY BERRY [*helping her to the fire*]. I'm jes' wearin' 'em. I didn't want to be ketched empty. I'm leavin' in a few minutes and le's us enjoy ourselves, and forgit about Georgy.

CUMBA. No, they's somethin' wrong. Whar's Steve?

HENRY BERRY [*looking at* MAYNO *and* JANE]. He's waitin' for me . . . out thar. [*He points toward the swamp.*]

CUMBA. Why didn't he come in wid you? Is he well and strong? How I'd love to see 'im!

HENRY BERRY. One of us had to wait for th' othern't, and he's all right. How you feelin', mammy? Is your haid better now?

CUMBA. Yes, I'm gittin' better now. I wants to git well time you and Steve comes home for good. [*Stroking his hand.*] Has the Gov'nor pardoned ye already?

HENRY BERRY. No, mammy, not jes' yit. But it'll be all right soon. . . . Steve and me's jes' passin' through. . . . Now le's us enjoy ourselves. I got to be movin' in a minute. Steve's waiting for me. . . . Mebbe we'll talk about Georgy some other time. . . . Mayno, bring me my ol' music box.

CUMBA. Yes, yes, git it and let 'im play for me. [MAYNO *brings the banjo from the next room.* HENRY BERRY *tunes it.* CUMBA *sits gazing in the fire, a troubled look on her face.*]

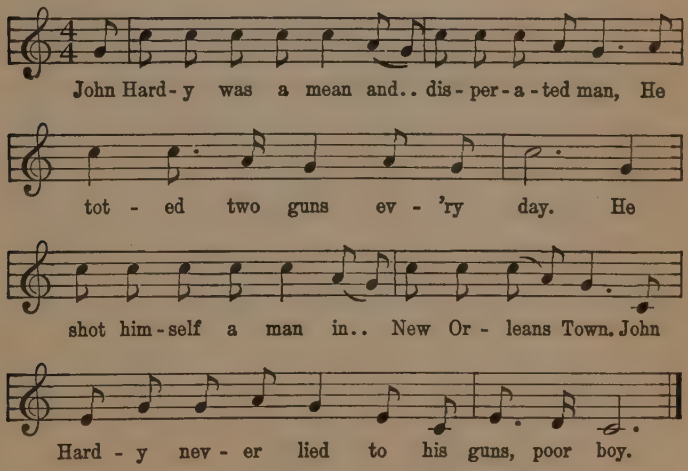
HENRY BERRY. You want me to play 'bout Job's Coffin hanging in the sky? [*Strangely.*] That was Steve's piece.

JANE [*nervously*]. Don't, don't play that. It's too lonesome. [*She shivers.*]

HENRY BERRY. What piece you want me to play? [*To* CUMBA. *She makes no reply.* HENRY BERRY *looks at her. He strums several bars, his face gradually losing its tense expression.*] What you want me to play, muh?

CUMBA. Play anything. Some o' the ol' pieces.

HENRY BERRY. I'll play that piece 'bout poor John Hardy. [*He plays and sings three stanzas of the ballad "John Hardy."*]


John Hard-y was a mean and.. dis-per-a-ted man, He
tot - ed two guns ev - 'ry day. He
shot him-self a man in.. New Or - leans Town. John
Hard - y nev - er lied to his guns, poor boy.

He's been to the east and he's been to the west
And he's been this wide world round,
He's been to the river an' been baptized,
An' he's been on his hanging ground, poor boy.

John Hardy's father was standing by,
Saying, "Johnnie, what have you done?"
He murdered a man in the same ol' town,
You ought a-seed him a-using of his guns, poor boy.

[*He stops and gazes pensively before him.*]

CUMBA [*looking anxiously at* HENRY BERRY]. What's the matter, son? You don't play it like you used to.

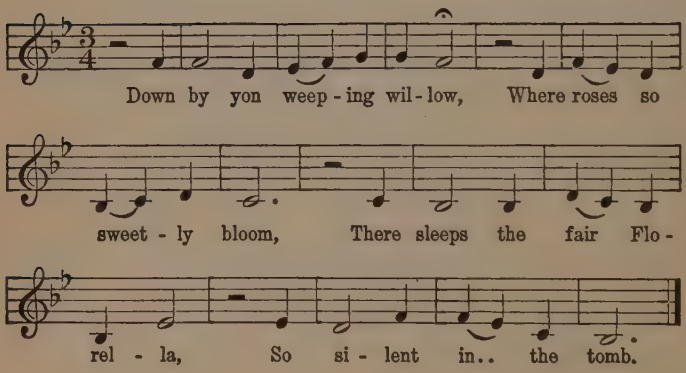
HENRY BERRY. It ain't nothing. I'll play yo' other piece now, that Florelly song.

CUMBA. Yes, play it. Allen allus said 'twas a good piece.

HENRY BERRY.

THE FAIR FLORELLA

An Old Ballad



She died not broken-hearted,
No sickness her befell,
But in one moment parted
From all she loved so well.

Down on her knees before him,
She begged 'im for her life,
But deep into her bosom
He plunged the fatal knife.

[*Before the last verse ends, owl hoots are heard outside.* HENRY BERRY *stops, listening. The banjo slips through his hands to the floor. All three look at him questioningly.*]

CUMBA. What is it, boy? Don't look that-a-way. [*Again the hooting of an owl is heard.* HENRY BERRY *rises to his feet, takes his rifle from the chimney corner and stands an instant tensely silent. Slowly his defensive attitude changes to one of despair. They watch him anxiously as he comes back to his former place in the room, looks down at his banjo, makes a move as if to pick it up, then turns to* CUMBA.]

HENRY BERRY. Well, I'm goin'. I've sorto' tried to be a fitten boy to you, but I reckon I made poor outs at it. [*He bends and kisses her. She rises and clings to him.*]

CUMBA. You ain't a-goin', air ye? It'll be for the las' time and I know it.

HENRY BERRY. Yes'm, I got to go. Didn't you hear Steve's signal? He's a-waitin'. [*Making an indefinite motion with his hand toward the swamp, he loosens her hold, kisses* JANE, *and makes a sign for* MAYNO *to follow him. They both go out.* CUMBA *wrings her hands and follows him toward the door. Then she becomes calm.*]

CUMBA. Let him go off now, an' I'll never see 'im agin. His sperit's broke and he won't be a-goin' back to Georgy. I see it in his face that he's quittin' it all.

JANE. No'm, he ain't, he's a-goin' straight back. . . . He and Steve is.

CUMBA. No, he ain't a-goin' back. Cain't I see what's in his face? They'll git 'im and 'twon't be long, and then Steve'll be shot down next, and there'll be only a handful o' their clothes for me to look at. [JANE *weeps silently.*] Whar's Mayno?

JANE. She's jes' stepped out a minute. She'll be back.

CUMBA. Yes, and I know, they're goin' to git 'im. They's a-setting for him thar in the black night.

JANE. No'm, they ain't, I tell you. They'll never git Henry Berry. [*Old* CUMBA *shakes her head mumbling. She goes to the chest at the left and takes out the burlap bag. The lid of the chest falls.* JANE *starts up.*] Put it back, put it back. You mustn't look at 'em tonight. Come back to the fire. [*She tries to take the bag from her.*]

CUMBA. No, chile, I ain't. I'm goin' to look at all that's left of 'em.

JANE. Let 'em be!

CUMBA [*waving her off*]. No, git away. Soon Henry Berry's 'll be in there, too. [*She stops and looks at the bag.*] Janie, who's been foolin' wi' this? What's . . . [*She hurries to the table and holding the sack close to the candle, opens it. She catches hold of a coat sleeve and draws out Steve's coat. A gasping dry sound comes from her throat. She drops the bag and holds the coat in her trembling hands.*] It's Steve's! How came it here? It's Steve's!—one I made 'im myself.

JANE. Oh, muh, let . . . What ails you?

CUMBA. I s'picioned it! And they been foolin' me.

JANE [*hopelessly*]. Yes'm, it's Steve's. [CUMBA *sways to and fro.*]

CUMBA. You been foolin' me! You been foolin' me! [*She stands rigid for a moment, then speaks in a hard, lifeless voice.*] It warn't right to fool me like that. . . . When'd it happen?

JANE. Las' week. . . . They got 'im down on the big road by the swamp, an' . . .

CUMBA. Hush! Don't tell me 'bout it. I'm afflicted and defeated enough now. They's only one left and they'll git 'im soon. . . . Did they put Steve away like a man?

JANE. I dunno. The sheriff give 'is clothes to me. [*A shot is heard in the distance, followed by a woman's scream.*]

CUMBA [*starting up and speaking in a shrill voice*]. They got 'im now! They got 'im now! The last un's gone! [*She tries to go out at the door.* JANE *stops her.*]

JANE [*catching her by the arm*]. Don't do that! [CUMBA *goes back to the sack, picks up* STEVE'S *coat, and stares at it dully.*]

CUMBA. They tuck 'em all now. They tuck 'em all.

JANE. Muh, it had to come. An' it's better that-a-way.

CUMBA [*lifelessly*]. Better that-a-way?

JANE. Yes, it's better like that. They was wrong from the jump.

CUMBA. Wrong! My boys was good boys. They ain't never . . . [*Raising her hands above her head, she speaks*

fiercely.] May Ol' Master send his fires on them that done it! An' . . .

JANE [*sobbing*]. Oh, why'd they do it!

CUMBA. No. It says as how we'd ought to love 'em 'at does us wrong. [*She closes her eyes, swaying slightly from side to side.*]

JANE. Let me help you to lie down now!

CUMBA. Yes, it's better that-a-way, I reckon. [*Her face shows resignation to sorrow. She speaks with a sort of joy in her voice.*] An' I won't be livin' in hope and fear no mo', will I? [*Slowly.*] And when the owls hoot through the swamp at night, and the whippoorwills sing in the thicket at dark, I won't have cause to think that's one o' my own a-givin' of 'is signals, an' tryin' to slip back to 'is ol' home, the only place he loves,—will I? [*She drops down into the chair behind the table.*] An' I won't lie awake at night, thinkin' they're in danger . . . for He's done give 'em His peace at last. [MAYNO *enters running. Old* CUMBA *stands up.*]

MAYNO. He shot 'isself. He shot 'isself! He give me this coat to give to you, an' then the sheriffs crope from the thicket at 'im, but he shot 'isself 'fore they got to 'im, and they tuck 'im and toted 'im off! [*She drops into her chair exhausted, rocking to and fro. Old* CUMBA *takes the coat from her, looks at it, and then puts it in the sack. She puts* STEVE'S *coat in also and stands looking down at the bag.*]

CUMBA. Thar's all that's left o' them I loved . . . a bundle o' clothes to show for my man an' four grown sons. [*She stops an instant.*] You'll all sleep quiet at last. [*She stands a moment silent, then shrilly.*] But they're all gone, and what call hev I got to be living more. . . . [*She raises her hand as if in a curse. But her face softens, and as the curtain falls, she stands with both hands outstretched on the clothes, blessing them.*] [1]

[CURTAIN.]

[1] The actual story of the old Lowrie mother somewhat parallels that of Maurya in Synge's *Riders to the Sea.* In the one case the mother sees her sons sacrificed before the power of the law. In the other she sees them claimed by the terribleness of the sea. So far as the suffering is concerned, the forces in both cases might be the same.

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HEARTS ENDURING[1]

A Play in One Scene

By

JOHN ERSKINE

Professor of English at Columbia University

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INTRODUCTION

HEARTS ENDURING

John Erskine has in his various volumes of prose and poetry achieved a singular degree of impersonality. He is extraordinarily adept in keeping both the external circumstances of his career and the crises of his inner life from his readers. This fine reticence is largely a matter of temperament and training. This very reticence is in itself revealing.

Since he is perhaps, in spite of his success with *The Private Life of Helen of Troy* and with *Galahad,* primarily a poet, there is interest in this rare and brief snatch of autobiography:

For me poetry began with three and a half lines from the *Idylls of the King.* So vivid was the experience that I still see just where the words stood on the page, and just how the afternoon sun streamed through the windows, and how the old green-bound copy of Tennyson was transfigured as I read—

> . . . Long stood Sir Bedivere
> Revolving many memories, till the hull
> Looked one black dot against the verge of dawn,
> And on the mere the wailing died away.

. . . Did I gain more from reading those lines in *The Passing of Arthur,* which were for me the doorway to poetry, or from reading Plato's *Symposium,* which was the home itself?

These lines from *The Passing of Arthur* have, without doubt, deep significance taken in connection with the cir-

cumstances of John Erskine's childhood, but what these circumstances are, were they discoverable, would lie too deep below the surface for casual treatment. The Arthurian stories, as *Galahad* bears witness, have never lost their fascination for Mr. Erskine. Plato's idea of beauty is the foundation of John Erskine's life. As he writes in one of the sonnets in the brief sequence called *Versailles:*

> What I have seen, I know now, is forever.
> Beauty, as men here found it, satisfies; . . .
> And what are lips and hands for, but to tell
> How once the soul bowed before beauty's face?

Even during John Erskine's years as a graduate student at Columbia University, the impression prevailed among the undergraduate bodies that he was destined to distinction in the world of letters and quite probably also in the world of affairs. As a very young man, his personality and his scholarship were impressive. The verse which he contributed to college publications held promise of future achievements of high quality. What is more, John Erskine carried about with him the atmosphere of success. No observer of the Columbia scene in those early years of the present century could fail to sense this aura or to miss the significance of the rare combination to be found in John Erskine of unusual sensitiveness to several kinds of beauty and the ability to think straight along rigidly defined lines. In a recent volume of his critical writings, *The Literary Discipline,* Erskine pays tribute in the preface to one of the strongest influences of this period, to George Edward Woodberry, who during a golden age taught literature at Columbia University and under whose instruction John Erskine sat. These are the words in which the author of *Hearts Enduring* acknowledges his obligation to this teacher of his young manhood:

Indeed, more than anyone else among us, he has kept his faith that youth, given time enough, will discover art as it will find out other incarnations of beauty, and will achieve new miracles in its worship. Twenty-four years ago he taught us to love the masters in poetry—no easier thing to do for boys then than it is now.

Mr. Erskine became a doctor of philosophy of Columbia University in 1903. Having been born on October 5, 1879, he was then just completing his twenty-fourth year. But Time, "the subtle thief of youth," had not stolen upon him. The bud and bloom of academic success and literary achievement were even then burgeoning.

His teaching, undertaken first at Columbia as a Fellow, he continued at the same institution until 1909, in which year, called to Amherst College, he began a service of seven years' duration in the Department of English. Since 1916, Mr. Erskine has taught as a full Professor of English at his own alma mater.

In the quarter of a century that has elapsed since his college days, he has received recognition in various quarters. He is, for example, vestryman of the corporation of Trinity Parish in New York. In the chapel of St. Agnes in this parish he presides over the Sunday School, and in the same little church he plays very beautifully on the organ. Added to his other not inconsiderable gifts is his virtuosity in music. His public piano recitals share popularity with his well-known "best sellers," *The Private Life of Helen of Troy* and *Galahad, Enough of His Life to Explain His Reputation.*

The substantial dignity of his position in his own community is further evidenced by his membership in the National Institute of Arts and Letters and by his presidency, from 1920 to 1923, of the Authors' Club. The war years gave him opportunity for a new type of suc-

cessful work in the field of education. He was first, from 1918 to 1919, chairman of the Army Education Committee of the American Expeditionary Force. In the latter year he was made Educational Director of the University of the American Expeditionary Force at Beaune. This little French town made him an honorary citizen, and France gave him the valued decoration of Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur.

Mr. Erskine, in spite of his preoccupation with letters, finds time to write and to talk on the subject of teaching literature. One of his chief concerns in life seems to be the popularizing of literature as a fine art. John Erskine himself, it is important to realize, is among the few really great teachers of literature in his generation. His attitude toward teaching he has indicated in his admiration for Lafcadio Hearn's dedication to his task. "This consecration to work done in obscurity," writes Erskine in his introduction to *Pre-Raphaelite and Other Poets,* "is as rare in teaching as in other human activities. Observing it on every page of Hearn's lectures, I marvel at the integrity of his character." As George Edward Woodberry's creative gifts and literary reputation once served as powerful and unique auxiliaries to his work in the classroom, so do his disciple's, John Erskine's, contributions to American letters strengthen his leadership and guidance of youth in the Elysian fields of beauty. The enthusiasm of John Erskine's students for literature, and for his method of presenting it, is a manifestation of which he may well be extremely proud.

His own literary output has been varied. His great recent success, *The Private Life of Helen of Troy,* is a fiction in the form of a series of dialogues in which Helen, her husband, her child, her neighbors, her friends, and her servant review, from various angles, the sanctions

and tabus of society. Helen, with all her legendary attributes, is yet such an one as might have received her intellectual training at the hands of moderns like Bertrand Russell or James Harvey Robinson. Helen of Troy has not always been thus represented by John Erskine's art. In his *Penthesileia* of an earlier epoch, Helen appears conventionally enough:

> . . . and this miracle might be,
> That first a woman bound us with her love,
> And at the last a woman sets us free.

John Erskine's past contains also six sonnets, a sequence, on *Paris, Helen's Lover,* in which the myriad-minded lady is described in these terms:

> For when he saw with terror open-eyed
> That fixed immortal beauty by his side,
> Impeccable, invincible, sublime,
> He yearned for beauty of the earlier strain
> That could relax a little and be plain,
> And rest a lover's heart from time to time.

Both *The Private Life of Helen of Troy* and *Galahad,* for all their place on shelves reserved for novels, present, because of the predominance of dialogue in their pages, the superficial aspect of plays.

Besides writing fiction in dialogue form, Mr. Erskine has also worked in the field of drama proper. In 1907 he wrote, in blank verse, with William C. de Mille as collaborator, "*Noblesse Oblige,*" the scene of which is laid in France during the Jacquerie (1358). The four characters include a prodigal younger son of the nobility with Villon-like propensities, a faithful servant, a scheming senior brother—as old as the story of Joseph in the

Bible—and his shallow, proud wife. The title of this one-act play refers to the behavior of Raoul, the younger brother of George, Duc de Marney; Raoul gives his life for George and his duchess, to show how a true aristocrat may react when put to the test.

In 1914, when Columbia University was celebrating the seven hundredth anniversary of Roger Bacon, Mr. Erskine composed, with the collaboration of John J. Coss, *A Pageant of the Thirteenth Century,* characterized by a rare understanding of this type of drama. In this pageant, blank verse, heroic couplets, and lyric forms were produced by Mr. Erskine. The prose of the pageant—Mr. Erskine's prose is a pattern of memorable rhythms—is keyed to produce the effect of the Pauline epistles in the King James Version.

Hearts Enduring, the latest of Mr. Erskine's plays, surpasses in intensity and character values his earlier experiments. In his critical speculations, the nature of drama has occupied him at times. *Hearts Enduring* illustrates some of his theories on the subject. For instance, in his volume *The Kinds of Poetry,* he has thus stated certain critical distinctions which should be considered in connection with *Hearts Enduring:*

> That situation is dramatic which brings men suddenly to account, and he who has the eye for drama sees in life a perpetual judgment day. It is not a matter of analysis, nor of training, but of temperament, and therefore the young Shakespeare, when he writes a sonnet-sequence, manages to write a drama, and later, when the structure of his plays seems premeditated or elaborated, the complexity can be accounted for by the dramatic sense through which he apprehends life. . . . If the story is to be of value as proving the past, the persons must all speak and act conscious only of the present, without suspicion that they are terms in a demonstration.

That is, they must act and speak lyrically. Each present moment, as it passes through the reader's or the spectator's mind, will be interesting in proportion to its emotional intensity, which is furnished partly by the lines, partly by the acting, partly by the situation. These all are lyrical elements. Situation has nothing to do with the dramatic sense, except as it affords character an opportunity to display itself.

The emotional intensity of which Mr. Erskine writes pervades *Hearts Enduring* to a singular degree; that is, so far as the interplay of lines, situation, and character is concerned. A fourth factor, variable in its nature, the acting of the two rôles, will, it is perfectly obvious, also control the temperature curve. The "He" and "She" of *Hearts Enduring,* though they are infinitely more than mere terms in Mr. Erskine's dramatic syllogism, do, nevertheless, illustrate his contention that—he is talking of Creon, Jocasta, and Œdipus in Sophocles's play—

> the fact that all three characters submit, as it were, to the same judgment day and are punished for the same faults, suggests the observation in passing, that the dramatic point of view tends to unify life at any given moment by discovering in it a homogeneous past.

The dramatic monologue has also served Mr. Erskine. He has written a series of three monologues, labeled *Allegro, Scherzo,* and *Andante Serioso,* which he comprehends under the title *Sonata.* Being dramatic monologues, the "movements" suggest Browning. An artist, his model, and a philistine frequenter of art galleries give expression to their several attitudes toward Art. As the monologues progress, however, Browning is forgotten; and Robert Frost's and Edwin Arlington Robinson's

treatment of colloquial speech rhythms in blank verse comes to mind. John Erskine's return to drama, in the more narrowly restricted sense, in the years to come, will be awaited with interest. I believe that there will be many more entries under " plays."

TO

HÉLÈNE BOUSSINESQ

HEARTS ENDURING

NOTE

I wrote this miniature drama some years ago to experiment with certain convictions I have as to how plays should be written, staged, and acted.

Like most theatre-goers, I have suffered annoyance from my ability to foresee what will happen on the stage before it happens, and to know what the actors will say before they say it. To be sure, this attitude of providence is often essential for the effect, and in such cases it is carefully contrived for us by the author. I speak, however, of those more numerous moments when we are bored with waiting for the action and the dialogue to catch up with us. It was my intention to make a drama with such economy of material that the imagination of the audience would be fully occupied from beginning to end, with as little opportunity for relaxing attention as would be permitted in a well-wrought short-story.

Like most theatre-goers, again, I have long observed that some of the stage-setting in every play is needed to tell the plot or to define the characters, and that the rest of the scenery and furnishing is superfluous decoration, which we do not even see, after the action has once gripped us. I wished to discard all scenery and properties which would not enter the play directly as part of its language. In this piece the image of the Virgin suggests an atmosphere of devotion—the mood in which I desired the story to be heard. The man's costume suggests the Middle Ages—as close a date as one needs for a fairly universal situation. The bare tree seen through the window suggests winter or autumn, to give further the tone I desired. The fireside and the fagots suggest a peasant hut, and the light generalizes the two characters by making the man

and woman little more than shadows in the room, distinguishable chiefly by their voices.

I wanted the audience to weigh carefully everything they saw and every word they heard. The scene should be acted, therefore, with sustained dignity, with few movements and those deliberate; and the words should be carefully enunciated, with subdued emphasis throughout. Nine-tenths of the motions on the modern stage are meaningless, and distract the audience from complete participation in the scene.

Hearts Enduring was first performed by the Columbia University Dramatic Association on January 16, 1914, under the direction of Mr. William C. de Mille. The woman was played by Miss M. E. Pennoyer; the man, by Mr. H. Milch.

J. E.

CHARACTERS

HE
SHE

SCENE: *Far away.*
TIME: *Long ago.*

The interior of a hut. At the right as you face the stage, a fire smouldering on the hearth. At the back a door hinged on the right side. Between the door and the left wall, a window, about four feet from the floor. On the left wall, an image of the Virgin. Between the image and the door, a low pallet cot. Between the door and the fireplace, a rough table and a bench. Between the fireplace and the front of the stage, a bundle of fagots against the wall.

When the door is open, the hills can be seen in the distance, as though a valley were between. A bare tree across the road shows through the window. When the play begins there is a fairly bright twilight, but darkness

settles steadily, until at the end the only light is the red glow from the fireplace.

When the curtain rises, you see a woman kneeling at the hearth with her back toward you. She mends the fire, which at once brightens. She wears a dark dress, with a shawl drawn over her head. At no time do you see her face.

When the fire is well started, she moves slowly to the door, opens it enough to look down the road to the left, then closes it again, then starts toward the image of the Virgin, then pauses at the window to look again down the road. All this she does listlessly, as though the procedure were an old routine. Suddenly at the window her attention is caught; she hurries to the door for a better view; she stands transfixed as though she recognized someone approaching; she closes the door; in a sort of panic she goes over toward the image and throws herself on her knees before it.

In a moment a man slowly passes the window, looks in, goes to the door and knocks. The kneeling woman turns toward the door, with extended arms, then resumes the attitude of prayer. He knocks again. No answer.

HE [*from without*]. Ho, there! [*Still no answer. The man throws the door open violently, and stands in the doorway. He is tall and well made but somewhat gaunt; his hair and beard are long and thin. He wears the pilgrim's costume of the Middle Ages—broad hat, sombre coat, and hose—and he carries a long staff and a bundle. Seeing the woman at her prayers, he takes off his hat and reverently stands for a second; then he turns, sees the table, puts his hat and bundle on it, and leans his staff against the wall. He then shuts the door with some energy, as though to rouse her, but she does not stir. He begins to walk toward her. She suddenly rises to her feet. He stops where he is.*] Are you the woman?

SHE [*quietly*]. What woman?

[*He hesitates, then takes a step toward her.*]

SHE [*passionately, in a harsh, strained voice—moving a little away from him*]. Go back! Don't look at me!

HE. I have looked at wretchedness enough this day. It is no pleasure to see an old woman unhappy. I would not have broken in upon your prayers, but I was told to come.

SHE [*defiantly*]. Who told you?

HE. Your husband, down in that terrible valley.

SHE [*very quietly*]. I have no husband.

HE [*surprised*]. He spoke as if— [*Apologetically.*] I found no other living creature in this deserted country but you two; I thought you dwelt together. He sent me here—he would not answer questions. "Ask her, on the hill," he said; "she can tell you."

SHE [*quietly, as before*]. I have no husband. I am alone. It is four years since I heard a human voice—till you came to my door. [*She draws the shawl tighter round her face. He moves away from her, toward the front of the stage.*]

HE. Only four years!

SHE [*turning slightly toward him*]. Why do you say "*only* four years"?

HE [*facing her again—she turns away from him*]. It is *ten* years since I rode from yonder valley—since I saw her standing there in the orchard by the castle, the sunlight on her through the white blossoms. I was to find her there, waiting, there as I left her, unchanged.

SHE [*with bitterness*]. You were fortunate.

HE. Fortunate! I have worn slave-chains nine years, under the scorching sun; every hour, every minute, she might be waiting there in the orchard, wondering why I did not come, wondering if I were dead, or if I had forgotten. Forgotten! With branch and tree burned in my brain, and herself standing there fadeless! [*He looks toward the window.*] Now to find the country a waste, every tree blasted, her castle empty, in ruins, and the orchard—not even a stricken bough to show where it grew! [*Turning fiercely toward her.*] Where is Lady Alice? Where are her people? [*She gropes her way to the image, and leans against it.*] What is that horrible, wrinkled

old man doing down there by the castle, crawling over ruins, picking up charred sticks, and whining at me to come to you? [*He turns away from her toward the fireplace; as she speaks he stops.*]

SHE. Why do you call him a horrible, wrinkled old man? If he is old—we cannot help being old. [*She moves toward him, and sinks on the edge of the pallet, with her head bowed, so that he cannot see her face.*]

HE [*turning toward her*]. But he was old in a terrible way. [*Crosses to the fireplace.*] His skin was like chalk, and there was too much of it, as though part of him were dead. [*Turning toward her again.*] His eyes, bleared and swollen; his hair, thin and limp; his voice, cracked and harsh, like— [*Stops in sudden embarrassment.*]

SHE [*in the same harsh, strained voice as before*]. Like mine?

HE [*contritely*]. I am a broken man; I say ungentle things. [*Seats himself, looking into the fireplace.*] But my only comfort has been the thought of beauty—of my radiant woman, of this happy valley, which held sunlight, and her. How I have prayed and dreamt! And now to return and find—not the beauty I thought could not change, but foul ugliness, ugliness, ugliness— [*He buries his face in his hands. She rises, and after a pause, crosses to the front of the table behind him, and speaks to him deliberately, as though choosing her words.*]

SHE. I am an ugly old woman, as you have said. But one thing I would tell you now, if I were Lady Alice; I would say, "You have loved my beauty more than you have loved me."

HE [*startled, speaking to himself*]. The day we were betrothed she said something like that!

SHE. She was a wise woman. You have said little about not finding her, but much about your dislike of ugliness. Would not a true lover care first to know whether his lady were alive or dead?

HE [*very angry*]. Stop! God in heaven knows—

SHE [*interrupting him*]. Are you still high and proud, and calling on God in heaven? Well if your misery these nine years had taught you a little mercy and a little patience. Will you taunt an old woman with her age? You rode away on a fine horse, with your armor and your sword; do you come on foot now like a wayfarer, and think to find welcome in fair eyes? [*Bending over him, with sudden intenseness.*] Where is the brightness of your own blue eyes, that your lady called grey, to tease you? [*She starts back, as though expecting the question to bring him to his feet. It does. She turns and moves toward the door. He follows.*]

HE. You know that? You know what she said?

SHE [*with her back to him, but more intensely, as though hurrying to have her say*]. You remember Lady Alice's beauty as she stood there in the orchard where you saw her last? Why not recall what she said to you then?

HE [*going back to the left of her as though to see her face*]. Now I will know who you are!

SHE [*turning to the right, terror-stricken, and retreating to the fireplace*]. Stand back!

HE [*hesitating and puzzled*]. Who are you? Why don't you look at me? Why are you afraid?

SHE [*laughing hysterically*]. It is for you to fear.

HE [*coming toward her*]. Fear what? [*He is about to put his hand on her shoulder.*]

SHE [*shrinking down beside the stool*]. The plague!

HE [*staggering back toward the pallet bed; then in fear of it, staggering toward the door*]. The plague here?

SHE [*seating herself and looking into the fireplace*]. What else should have spoiled this beautiful land? Four years ago the plague came into the valley. Those that died were fortunate. Those that lived—their voices were cracked, their bodies palsied, and their faces horrible, like the face of—that man in the valley; and they seemed old before their time.

HE. Is Lady Alice—is Lady Alice—did the plague come to all here?

SHE. It came with a pilgrim from the east, who told Lady

Alice news from the war. She would stand in the orchard and talk with all travelers, in the hope of tidings of her lover. She was stricken first.

HE [*covers his face; then with a ray of hope*]. Who destroyed the castle?

SHE. The plague was strongest there; no one could live in it. She herself had it destroyed. [*She rises, realizing what she has said.*]

HE [*crossing toward her*]. Then she did not die? [*She goes over in front of the image, and falls on her knees. He looks at her a moment, then takes his hat and staff and bundle from the table and starts for the door.*] I will find her now out of the whole world! [*As soon as she begins her prayer he stops in the doorway to listen.*]

SHE. O Constancy, Mother of God, give me wisdom of speech and wisdom of silence. Teach him in loss to cherish what is his forever. [*He comes back into the room, puts hat, staff, and bundle on the table again, and approaches her, speaking quietly and earnestly.*]

HE. I have asked you who you are, and why you will not look at me. If there is any meaning in your words, if you do not play with my misery, tell me the truth. Is Lady Alice dead? [*She rises. With a flash of insight he comes nearer.*] Let me see your face!

SHE [*taking a step away from him, with great composure*]. You would see nothing there to remind you of Lady Alice, if that is your thought. Who I am, you would not know though you saw, unless I told my name. Which of Lady Alice's maids would you remember now, had no plague at all changed them? So great is the change that you called that man old, who is probably no older than yourself; you called me a hag, yet Lady Alice would be no younger, if she were here to greet you. What name I bore I will keep to myself. I had such beauty as you loved, but I have none now, and you must have mercy on me, for it was through Lady Alice's love for you that this misery came on us all. [*Pause. He goes toward the fireplace, and she turns to him. When she speaks again he stops.*]

It was Lady Alice's wish that I should wait here for you, with a message; she did not know but it might be her last. She bade the man yonder send you here. How faithful he has been! He and I have waited for four years.

HE [*facing about; she turns away*]. You had a message for me, and did not tell me at once? Where is Lady Alice? What has become of her? Why do you torture me?

SHE. Ever since you came I have tried to tell you, but you will not understand. She used to talk of you as she lay stricken; she would say that no one ever was so hard to move from an idea; she was right. The night before you left her, she said, she chided you with a silly desire for fame, because your birth was less gentle than hers, and you wanted a name in battle; you would not deny it, yet you would not stay with her. [*He slowly crosses to the fireplace, and sinks upon the bench. She watches him, then follows, and stands in front of the table behind him.*] She would talk of your parting in the orchard. You remember her looks, but she thought of your words. You said you chose that place for farewell because it was the most beautiful, and the trees were in bloom; you would remember her so. When she said that all beauty fades, you answered, not hers; you would see that beauty in her as long as she lived. These words of yours she often said over, when she knew the plague had turned her to a hag. Little she cared herself for beauty. When she heard of death and wounds in the desert, she longed to fly to you. Were she here now I think she would love you, changed as you are. [*He sits as before, motionless. She impulsively comes forward toward him, then steps back.*] When she knew that her beauty was gone, she would say, "Even if he should know me now, perhaps he could not love me, but would try to, for honor's sake. He is stubborn and inflexible; he worships a steadfast beauty; he hates change. If he should come again now, with his cherished dream of me—" [*Pause.*] When she spoke thus, I think she was willing to die.

HE [*after a pause, looking up with a haggard expression*].

You have spoken a hard message as kindly as might be. You mean—she is dead?

SHE [*after a moment*]. Do I need to say? [*He bows his head. She comes down beside him, with arms out as though to comfort him. He feels her near, and looks up. She turns toward the fireplace, so that the audience cannot see her face, but he can, for the first time. He steps back in horror. For a second she stands motionless before his gaze.*]

HE [*aghast*]. Was she like that? [*She covers her face with both hands, and turns from him with a barely audible sob. He realizes what he has said.*] Forgive me! [*She does not answer.*] Where is she buried?

SHE [*very softly*]. Where you saw her last.

HE. In the orchard? [*She bows her head. He takes the motion for assent, quietly gathers up his things from the table, and starts for the door. He stops and turns toward her.*] I will find the spot. I think my heart will tell me when I come near her. [*He goes out. As he closes the door, she hurries to it, and leans against it for a moment. More quietly she goes to the window and gazes after him. Slowly she starts toward the image, but falls prostrate, with her arms stretched out in supplication.*]

[CURTAIN.]

BOOKS AND ARTICLES HELPFUL IN THE STUDY OF "HEARTS ENDURING"

* John Erskine: *Collected Poems. 1907-1922.* New York, 1922.

The Kinds of Poetry and Other Essays. New York, 1920.

The Moral Obligation to be Intelligent and Other Essays. New York, 1915.

* [With W. C. de Mille]: "Noblesse Oblige," *The Smart Set,* Vol. XXI, pp. 72-81. New York, 1907.

[With J. J. Coss]: *A Pageant of the Thirteenth Century for the Seven Hundredth Anniversary of Roger Bacon.* New York, 1914.

* *Sonata and Other Poems.* New York, 1925.

Lafcadio Hearn: *Appreciations of Poetry.* Selected and edited with an Introduction by John Erskine. New York, 1916.

Talks to Writers. Selected and edited with an Introduction by John Erskine. New York, 1920.

* Harry Salpeter: "John Erskine, Novelist," *The World,* February 27, 1927.

* For high school reference.

PEARLS[1]

A Little Comedy of Youth

By

DAN TOTHEROH

[1] Copyright, 1926. Applications for permissions to perform this play should be addressed to the author, 2720 Balboa Street, San Francisco, California.

INTRODUCTION

PEARLS

Prophecy as a literary form will never be dead or even moribund while critics of the day indulge their fancy by predicting undying fame for masterpieces still to be produced. Indeed the method of the witches in Shakespeare's play is a common one in contemporary criticism. Once the Thane of Glamis has become Thane of Cawdor, the third promotion becomes an automatic gesture: "All hail, Macbeth, that shalt be king hereafter!" So have the reviewers of the day dealt with Dan Totheroh, the young Californian—and certainly the material on which they base their auguries inspires confidence. It may well be that the chronicle of the American stage in the immediate future will be starred with his name. He is serious and sensitive, he has dramatic instinct, he perceives situations, he sees humanity as individuals and not in the mass, he has imagination, and he displays a pretty taste in symbols. Such are the characters and qualifications which he possesses to win success for him in the theatre.

Here in his own notes is Dan Totheroh's account of himself:

So you want some of my history, do you? Well, there's not very much to tell. Born in California and like everything else in that state began producing at an early age. It was in high school that I wrote my first play and had, in a small way, success with it. After high school came two valuable years in

stock and then a vaudeville engagement, and I wrote my first one-act play, *Her Kid Brother,* which I used as a vehicle for myself. Then the war came, during which I was writing all the time, even in the trenches, and I sold some of my fiction.

When the war was over, it was back to vaudeville again, coming to New York with a company. New York had nothing for me then, so, in 1921, I became associated with little theatres in San Francisco and Los Angeles and also with Mr. Garnet Holme, the well known pageant director of California. With him I wrote and produced two of my California pageants—*Tamelpa,* given every two years on Mt. Tamalpais, Marin Co., California, and a play of the redwoods called: *Ersa of the Red Trees.*

At this time I won the United Neighborhood prize with *In the Darkness,* a one-act play, and also began publishing one-acts in *The Drama—A Tune of a Tune, The Widdy's Mite,* and *The Stolen Prince* are some of them.

Wild Birds, a three-act drama of the prairies, was written in 1921 and received the prize for the best play written by a California playwright. In 1925 it was done in New York City and included in Mr. Mantle's ten best plays of the season. It is now being done in Los Angeles and is to be produced in Sweden, shortly.

In 1922 and 1923 I was still doing Little Theatre work and in 1924 I was producing director of dramatics at the University of California.

I am now in New York doing some new plays and waiting for the production of two soil plays which I sold after *Wild Birds* was produced. I am just publishing a child's book called *David Hotfoot,* and I have just finished a novel about the California orchards.

To these biographical notes might be added the fact that in 1927 or later a volume of Mr. Totheroh's plays for children will be brought out in the Junior Drama

League Series. *Pearls,* his contribution to the present volume, was written especially for this collection.

Wild Birds is without question Mr. Totheroh's most distinguished and most promising piece of work. The jury which awarded it the Hearst prize for the best manuscript submitted for production in the Greek Theatre of the University of California was composed of Eugene O'Neill, Susan Glaspell, and George Jean Nathan. Of *Wild Birds* Mr. Nathan has since written, " All it deserves is a prize for being a dramatic *château en Espagne*. . . . A fine play must, after all, be a fine play and not merely what might be a fine play. The Totheroh drama is a retelling of the Daphnis and Chloe fable, interlarded with considerable pseudo-Ibsen hocus-pocus." Eugene O'Neill, Kathleen Norris, and Charles H. Norris, however, have warmly praised the play.

Wild Birds, after its initial performance at the University of California, in Berkeley, was given a two weeks' run by the Players' Club of San Francisco, and, in the spring of 1925, it was successfully produced at the Cherry Lane Theatre in New York. Indeed, Mr. Totheroh's reputation has been built up in the Little Theatres of America. Like Eugene O'Neill he began his writing for organizations of this type, and they continue the presentation of his work to their audiences.

The scene of *Wild Birds* is laid on the prairies. A typically American landscape, the plains baked under the midday sun or transformed by the magic of the moon, is poetically conveyed as background to heighten the effect of the tragedy which is played against it. William Vaughn Moody has used a similar method with more magnificence in *The Great Divide.* In *Wild Birds* there is the same subjection of helpless and beauty-loving youth to malice and cruelty that produces the central situation

in John Masefield's *The Tragedy of Nan.* Totheroh's Maizie and Masefield's Nan inspire us with the same heartbreaking compassion. Totheroh's senile character, Sandy, who precipitates the love affair between Maizie and Adam in *Wild Birds,* reminds the reader inevitably of Gaffer Pearce in *The Tragedy of Nan.*

Totheroh's use in his drama of the resources of the American scene is particularly well illustrated in that speech of Sandy's which leads up to the crisis of the play:

I was rememberin' the time I saw a Sioux weddin' on the prairie above Skull Creek. A buck had a drum. He went thump, thump, thump fer a long time. A bone was his drumstick. Then the ol' chief rode up on a white hoss. It was the ol' chief's gal who was gettin' married. She was purty an' could run swift like a fox. She wore lots of red beads. . . . It wasn't much of a weddin'. The young chief had to catch the gal first. He had a hard time, but he did. Then he jest threw her over his hoss an' rode away with her, an' the drum went on—thump, thump, thump—

Wild Birds is not the only American play in which almost intolerable emotion is worked up by the effect on the nerves of the rhythmic repetition of a sound. Eugene O'Neill has employed this device notably in *The Emperor Jones* and under slightly different guise in *The Moon of the Caribbees.*

Totheroh's shorter plays all have their interesting moments. The scene of *In the Darkness* is also laid on the prairies with the accent falling on the barrenness of existence in isolated homesteads. The progressive blindness of the husband comes as an arresting revelation to a wife who is planning to flee the monotony and disillusionment of her life.

Both *The Widdy's Mite* and *A Tune of a Tune* are

studies of the vagrant humors of conventional Irish characters. *While the Mushrooms Bubble* is a frothy addition to the harlequinade of our contemporary theatre. *The Stolen Prince* is a Chinese play for children, worked out in the manner of *The Yellow Jacket,* and, by reason of its objective handling of Chinese stage conventions, appealing with especial force to the play instinct.

And now we shall settle ourselves comfortably to watch, from our window on the world, the reaction of the commercial theatre and the professional producer to Dan Totheroh, outstanding figure on the bills of amateurs who work in Little Theatre groups.

PEARLS

CHARACTERS

PEGGY LEWIS, *who took Maw's place.*
POLLY LEWIS, *the little sister.*
TAD LEWIS, *the kid brother.*
BROWN, *the stranger.*

SCENE: *The living-room of the Lewis flat in any large city. It is a small, commonplace room with dreary wallpaper, a duplicate of a million other rooms all over the United States. The chief furniture is a set of imitation oak, six pieces, five dollars down and five a week, consisting of a round center table, three straight chairs, a davenport and a sideboard with a mirror. There is also a big armchair with a chintz covering, up left center, beside the davenport, which has a few soggy cushions. The carpet is worn and dull in color, and the pictures on the walls are a few badly framed lithographs, reproductions of such household favorites as "The Horse Fair" and "The Doctor." Then there are garish calendars and magazine covers of Fisher girls and Christy, not framed, just pinned to the walls. The telephone is on a small stand up near the center door. The center door opens into a bleak hall. A door, left, takes you into a kitchen, and one, right, into a bedroom. On the center table are some books and magazines, also a vase with some flowers. The flowers are withered.*

The room is empty and dark when the curtain rises. The time is about 6:30 P.M.

There is a slight pause and then footsteps are heard in

the uncarpeted hall and a key grinds in the lock of the center door.

PEGGY LEWIS *enters, very carefully carrying a cake in a paper box. She feels her way about in the dark and sets the cake on the center table. Then she switches on the light. She is seen to be a motherly-looking girl of about nineteen, plain in appearance but with a kind, generous smile. She is dressed in a cheap blue suit and wears hat and frayed gloves. She takes off the hat and gloves and puts them on the sideboard, stooping to arrange her hair in the mirror. She whistles softly. She goes to the table and opens the box, taking out the cake. It is a layer cake with plain white frosting. She holds it up for a moment, looking at it proudly. She puts it back on the table and goes into the kitchen, left. She whistles louder in there and turns on a light. She is heard rattling a pan and opening some bags.*

Footsteps are heard running upstairs, a leaping gait, three steps at a time. The door is flung back and TAD LEWIS *bursts in. He is a tall, slender boy of about twenty. He is not good-looking, but he is bursting with energy, and youth sits upon his shoulders wearing a healthy grin and a cocked hat with a red feather. As soon as he enters he pulls off his cap and flings it across the room where it lands behind the big armchair.*

TAD [*calling into kitchen*]. Hello, Peggy! When did you get home?

PEGGY [*still in kitchen*]. Hello, Tad. I just came in about two minutes ago. [*Standing in door and pointing with a big spoon.*] *You're* late!

TAD. Oh, just a few minutes.

PEGGY. Few minutes, nothin'! Tad, have you been out with that Casey boy again? I don't want you to go around with boys like that.

TAD. Cross my heart an' hope to die, I ain't seen Casey for two days. He don't work at our bench no more, anyhow.

PEGGY. Then where was you?

TAD. Well, if you wanta know, I stopped in at old lady Murph's to see if she'd lend us her phonograph to play for Polly's birthday tonight, but the old tight wouldn't part with it. She says the last time she loaned it to us we scratched the records.

PEGGY [*indignantly*]. Did she tell you that?

TAD. Them was her very words, sweet sister.

PEGGY. Well, of all the nerve! She's had them scratchy old records ever since her first pair of twins was born, and *that's* some time ago, 'cause since then she's had—let's see [*counting on her fingers*]—Patrick, Mike, Bridget, Peg, Nora, Patsy, Finny, an' the new one they haven't christened yet because they've run outer names. [*She goes back into kitchen.*]

TAD [*spying the cake*]. Gee, look what's here! Ain't it pretty, though? [*He slyly scrapes off some of the frosting with his finger.*]

PEGGY [*coming in*]. Don't you dare touch it, Tad! Oh, you have! [*She rushes at him, but he runs around the table, laughing.*]

TAD. Aw, I didn't mean nothin'. I just wanted to see if it was soft or hard, you old crab you!

PEGGY [*picking up the cake*]. Yeh, I know you! You'd have the poor thing naked in five minutes!

TAD. What's the matter with Polly? Ain't she late?

PEGGY [*bearing the cake proudly to the kitchen*]. Old Rosenvelt wanted to see her.

TAD [*following* PEGGY *to the kitchen door and looking in as he talks*]. Gonna put on *all* them candles?

PEGGY. Only eighteen!

TAD. Gee, won't she be tickled stiff? Say, it looks somethin' like the kind Maw used to make.

PEGGY. Don't compare baker's stuff with Maw's high-class bakin', Tad!—But it *does* look sorta swell, don't it?

TAD. Yeh. Eighteen! Gee, Polly's gettin' old, ain't she? I remember when she had short dresses, an' long black stockin's, an' freckles on her nose, an' skinny pigtails, an'—

PEGGY. Yes, an' I remember when you wore long dresses!

TAD. Aw, let's not bring up ancient history. When do I eat? I'm hungry like a fox!

PEGGY. What did you do with your cap when you came in?

TAD. How do I know? I'm hungry!

PEGGY. Ain't I fixin' the chops now? Go an' find your cap. You know what'll happen tomorrow mornin'. You'll be runnin' around like a chicken with its head off an' blamin' me for usin' your lid for a dust-rag.

TAD. All right, you old crab you! [*He begins hunting for the cap, overturning things and upsetting the whole room in general. He can't find it.*] Aw, what's the use? You can't never find nothin' in this house, anyhow. Let's see—I came through the door like this, didn't I? [*He acts it out.*] I took off my lid an' threw it across the room. Now, by all rights, it oughter be right over *there!* [*Walks straight before him, but still cannot find it.*] Nope, *that* don't work! [*A happy idea strikes him. He goes to center table and picks up a paper knife. He returns to center door, and closing his eyes he revolves three or four times, finally throwing the paper knife. He rushes to the place where the knife has fallen. It happens to be the opposite side of the room from where the cap really is. He hunts about, and at last gives it up.*] An' *that* don't work, neither! [*He crosses the room and sits down in the armchair, apparently worn out.*]

PEGGY [*still in kitchen*]. Did you find it?

TAD. No!

PEGGY. Well, look some more.

TAD. Somethin' *eats* hats in this room. *Rats* don't eat hats, do they, Peg?

PEGGY. Don't be crazy!

TAD [*looking about from the chair, discouragement on his young brow*]. Gee, if Maw was only here *she'd* find it for me. She could find *anything,* Maw could. [*Enter* POLLY. *She is a pretty young girl with a mass of honey-colored hair and Irish-blue eyes. She looks tired, though, from the day's work in the store.*]

TAD [*springing up*]. Happy birthday, Polly. Help me find my lid, will you?

POLLY [*taking off her hat and gloves*]. Where'd you put it?

TAD. For the love of Mike, what a foolish question? Don't you suppose I'd find it if I knew where I put it?

POLLY. I dunno [*glancing casually about the room and finding it the first thing*]. There it is, right behind the chair where you was sittin'. [*Smiles and crosses to kitchen door.*]

TAD [*aghast*]. Well, what do you know about that? [*He picks up the cap, his eyes big with astonishment.*] There must be spooks in this room. I looked behind that chair fifty times, anyhow! [*He looks at cap, perplexed, then nonchalantly chucks it to the other side of the room, and walks down to the table.*]

POLLY. Hello, Peggy [*seeing cake*]. Well, what do you know about that! If this ain't the biggest surprise! You're *too* good, Peggy. I don't deserve this! Honest, I don't! [*She exits into the kitchen and the sound of a big, smacking kiss is heard.*]

TAD. Not so loud, please! [*He takes a small box from his pocket; opens it and takes out a string of pearls. He holds it up to the light.*]

PEGGY [*speaking from the kitchen*]. Tad!

TAD. Uh-huh? [*He quickly puts the necklace back into his pocket.*]

PEGGY. Did you hear anything about the pearl necklace what was swiped from the jewelry department?

TAD. Huh?

PEGGY. Didn't you know a pearl necklace was swiped from the store this mornin'?

TAD. Sure, but it was so common I went right on wrappin' packages.

PEGGY. But this wasn't no ten-cent one, Tad.

TAD. I know. Ain't the chops done?

PEGGY. Yes. I'm just fryin' the spuds. They'll be ready in two shakes. [*She begins singing.*]

POLLY [*entering and coming down to* TAD. *She puts her*

arms around his neck]. Gee, Tad, did you see the swell birthday cake with the pink candles?

TAD. Sure.

POLLY. You two kids are too nice to me. I don't deserve it.

TAD. Do you want us to throw you out in the rain, huh?

POLLY. Gee, I—I—

TAD. Gosh, Polly! You ain't goin' to cry, are you?

POLLY. Of course I ain't, but—but birthdays make me lonesome for Maw, that's all.

TAD. Sure they do, but it don't do no good to bawl about it. She'd rather see us laughin', so let's crack our faces, huh?

POLLY [*smiling*]. You're a nut, Tad!

PEGGY [*coming to kitchen door in her apron*]. All ready, Tad. If you're hungry, come on. I want a few words with Polly on the side, see?

TAD. All right, angel cake. [*He goes to kitchen door as* PEGGY *crosses to* POLLY. TAD *is about to exit when he turns back, and gives the box containing the pearls to* POLLY]. Here, Polly. Just a little somethin'. Many happy returns of the day. [*He laughs and runs into the kitchen, slamming the door.*]

POLLY. What do you know about that? Ain't he the best kid brother a girl ever had, Peggy?

PEGGY. He *sure* is. What did old Rosenvelt want to see you about?

POLLY. Just about the stolen pearl necklace. I wasn't the only one. He's questionin' a bunch of us. I guess your turn'll come tomorrow. The big fat-head, he makes me sick!

PEGGY. The nerve of some people! Believe me, if I'm interviewed tomorrow he'll sure get a generous piece of my mind. As if us girls would steal pearls! Why, we'd be scared to look at 'em even, let alone *wear* 'em!

POLLY. He says there's a possibility of 'em bein' swiped in the wrappin' department. He's goin' to quiz the guys down there. I've gotta put Tad wise. That nasty Rosie Blumb says she'll phone us when they find the thief, in case we might

be worried about our brother. She certainly thinks she's some class since she landed the job of bein' old Rosenvelt's private secretary. Remember when she worked downstairs in the hardware?

PEGGY. Don't knock, Polly. Rosie's got more brains than you or me. That's why she's where she is. Take off your hat to brains every time. Open the box, Polly.

POLLY [*opening the box*]. Ooh, Peggy, look! Pearls! [*She holds up the string.*]

PEGGY. Pearls! [*She snatches them away and looks at them closely.*] Polly!

POLLY [*scared by her tone*]. What?

PEGGY. Polly, I—I believe they're *real!*

POLLY. Real? You're crazy, Peg.

PEGGY [*looking at clasp*]. This says 14K., and look how they catch the light!

POLLY. But, gee, how could Tad buy *real* pearls?

PEGGY [*still examining them*]. Exactly like them what was stolen!

POLLY. Peg, what're you sayin'?

PEGGY. Tad's been goin' around with that Casey boy, an' a lot of other tough guys like that. The Casey boy works downstairs. I told Tad to keep away from him!

POLLY [*beginning to sob*]. Oh, it can't be—it can't—Why—why—

PEGGY [*sharply and firmly*]. Stop sobbin'! Hold yourself together. We'll find out.

POLLY. But—but you don't think—

PEGGY. I don't know *what* I think! Put the pearls around your neck. We mustn't let him know that we suspect him. There's probably a mistake, an' he'd never forgive us. [POLLY *puts the pearls around her neck with trembling fingers.*] Now, go to the door an' tell him how pretty you think they are. Ask him where he bought 'em.

POLLY [*walking to kitchen door and opening it*]. Tad!

TAD. Yeh? [*He comes to the door with a piece of bread in his hand and a napkin tucked in his neck. He grins broadly*

when he sees the pearls]. Did you like 'em? Gee, they look pretty, don't they?

POLLY. They're—they're just grand, Tad!

PEGGY. Just perfectly swell, kid.

POLLY. Where'd you buy 'em?

TAD [*flaring up*]. What's it to you? I *bought* 'em, didn't I? Ain't that enough? I suppose you'll be askin' me how much they cost, next!

PEGGY. Don't get so huffy, you big crab you! We just wanted to know what store you bought 'em at, so we could get some more like 'em, some time. They're so pretty an' all.

TAD. You can't get no more like *them* [*turning back to kitchen*]. My chop's gettin' cold. [*He exits, slamming door.*]

POLLY [*whimpering*]. Did you hear what he said? "You can't get no more like them!" Oh, Peg, I can't believe it—Why—

PEGGY. It's bein' with that Casey boy an' those other roughnecks! Didn't that gang steal an automobile last week?

POLLY. But they only did it for a joke. They returned the car, didn't they?

PEGGY. Yes, but they're a bad crowd anyhow. I told Tad he'd get into trouble if he went around with them. [*The telephone bell rings sharply, and both the girls stand as though petrified. The bell rings again.*]

POLLY. Don't answer! It might be the—

PEGGY. We *gotta* answer! [*She walks to the phone and takes off the receiver.* POLLY *stands with one hand covering the pearls as if to shield them from watching eyes, and listens intently to her sister's conversation.*] Hello. Yes. Yes. Oh, hello, Rosie. How are you? I'm swell, thanks. Nope, never felt better in my life! What? No! You don't say. They *did?* Gee, that's detective work for you! [*She laughs, but nervously.*] Thanks for tellin' me, Rosie. Oh, no, not at all. Good-bye. [*She hangs up the receiver; turns slowly and comes down to* POLLY.]

POLLY [*breathlessly*]. What was the old cat tellin' you?

PEGGY. They've traced the lost pearls to the wrappin' de-

partment. She says old Rosenvelt will land the thief by twelve o'clock tonight or bust.

POLLY. We've gotta get rid of these somehow without lettin' Tad get wise. [*She takes the pearls from her neck.*]

PEGGY. If we could only be alone. [*Walks up and down.*] If it was any other night but your birthday he'd maybe take Daisy to a movie, but he won't go now.

POLLY. Oh, what'll we do? Ugh, these pearls feel like they was burnin' my fingers— [*She drops the pearls into the pocket of her waist and, going up to* PEGGY, *puts her head on her sister's shoulder and sobs.*] Gee, if Maw was only here, she'd find a way—

PEGGY. There, there, Poll, this won't do. Ain't I always tried to do the right thing, just between us three? Ain't I always done the best I could to keep us three together? Do you think I'm gonna lose out now? Not much I ain't!

POLLY. Yes, but—but—

PEGGY. Do you think I'm gonna let 'em take our Tad away from us?—Well, I'd like to see 'em! Guilty or not guilty, he belongs to you an' me! I won't let 'em have him!

POLLY [*kissing* PEGGY *on the cheek*]. You're awful much like Maw, Peg. Honest, you are. You could make me believe you're Chief of Police, if you wanted to.

PEGGY. Cut that!

POLLY [*wiping her eyes*]. But—but how can you stop them from takin' him?

PEGGY [*firmly*]. Gimme the pearls, Polly. I'm goin' to take 'em to— [*But as* POLLY *fumbles in her pocket for the pearls,* TAD *enters, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand.*]

TAD. Say, ain't you kids eatin'?

PEGGY. I—I had a late tea an'—

TAD. Tea?—For the love of Mike! Goin' inter society now, Miss Lewis?

PEGGY. Yeh! So I ain't hungry.

TAD. I suppose *you* had tea with the Vanderbilts, huh, Polly?

POLLY. No, with the Morgans.

PEGGY. Say, Tad, ain't—ain't you goin' to take Daisy to the movies? There's a swell picture at The Crystal tonight. "Passionate Parties." They say it's just grand!

TAD [*flinging himself on the davenport*]. Nothin' doin'. It's Polly's birthday, ain't it? Besides, I'm broke an' dead tired. [*He yawns.*]

POLLY [*quickly*]. I'll give you the money, Tad. You don't have much fun. You go an' take Daisy.

TAD. Nothin' doin'! My borrowin' days are over. Nope, me for the hay, good an' early. Ain't you goin' to cut the cake?

POLLY. N-not now. It's a little too early. After you come back from the movies.

TAD. Say, what are you tryin' to do—throw me out? I'm tired an' busted, I tell you! Ain't that enough? [*Adding lamely.*] Anyhow, Daisy's off me.

PEGGY. Why, Tad?

TAD. Oh—

PEGGY. *I* know! She don't like you runnin' with that Casey gang. She told me herself.

TAD. I tell you I *ain't* runnin' with 'em—any more.

POLLY. How much do you need, Tad?

TAD. What for?

POLLY. The movies.

TAD. Well, if you don't take the big prize! You oughter go sellin' real estate! You're wastin' yourself at Rosenvelt's. I ain't goin' an' I mean it!

PEGGY. All right, you baby mule you!

POLLY. I might never be so generous again, Tad.

TAD. Say, Polly, where's the pearls? Why ain't you wearin' 'em? Don't you like 'em? Gee, a nice thing! What do you think I got 'em for—to put in the family jewel case?

POLLY [*laughing nervously and putting them around her neck*]. I—I think they're perfectly swell, Tad—*too* swell just to wear around the house.

TAD [*admiring them*]. Now, that's somethin' like it. Gee, they look pretty on you, Polly.

POLLY. They're swell, Tad, but—but won't you *please* tell us where you got 'em?

TAD. If you two don't beat the devil! Of course I won't tell you! Now, let up on that, won't you?

PEGGY. Don't talk that way to your sister, Tad!

TAD. Then make her stop askin' questions.

POLLY [*ready to cry under the strain*]. I—I wasn't askin' questions!

TAD. You was!

POLLY [*sobbing*]. I—I wasn't—I—I was just askin'—

PEGGY [*going to her*]. Polly, stop! An' *you* stop, too, Tad! A nice thing, fightin' on Polly's birthday. What would Maw think?

TAD [*ashamed*]. Aw—gee—well— Say, Peg, if you ain't eatin', come on an' read me a story. Here's this month's "Thrillers." [*Takes it up from the davenport.*] Find somethin' real bloody so I can fall to sleep.

PEGGY. I—I can't tonight, Tad, my—my throat's awful sore.

TAD. Aw, read soft-like. It won't hurt, Peg. Just a little while, won't you? Then we'll cut the cake, an' then I'll hit the hay. [*Yawns again.*]

PEGGY [*glancing at* POLLY, *who has gone down stage*]. All—all right, Tad. [*She pulls up the big chair and takes magazine from* TAD.] Let's see— [*She turns the pages and reads some of the titles.*] "Brute Strength," "Life or Death," "Perils of a Crook," "Captured by Black Pirates—" Ah, here's something that looks swell. "Victor's Victory." I always *did* love the name of Victor! [*She reads softly. This reading can be an excerpt from any exciting story. As she reads,* POLLY *walks up and down, nervously, and suddenly goes into the kitchen.*]

PEGGY [*stopping after she has read for a few minutes*]. Tad! [*No answer.*] Oh, Tad! [*She shakes him by the shoulder.*] Oh, Polly!

POLLY [*coming to the kitchen door*]. What?

PEGGY. He's asleep. He can't stay here. I'll wake him up. [*A loud rap comes on the hall door.*]

POLLY [*in a frightened whisper*]. Who can that be?

PEGGY. Shh! I'll cover him with the couch cover. You wheel up the chair, Polly. [*They do so.*] Now he can't be noticed. [*Rap comes again.*]

POLLY [*weakly*]. Are—are you goin' to open the door?

PEGGY. Su-sure— [*She advances toward door as* POLLY *sinks into the big chair.* PEGGY *reaches the door and is about to turn the knob, when she sways and leans her head against the door. The rap comes once more.* PEGGY *straightens, with an effort, and her jaw stiffens. She opens the door.*]

PEGGY [*very formally*]. Good evenin'. [MR. BROWN, *a tall, professional-appearing man, steps into the room with an air of authority and bows to the girls. As he bows to* POLLY *she realizes that the pearls are about her neck and she clutches them with both hands, attempting to hide them from his sight.*]

BROWN. Good evening. Is Mr. Lewis in?

PEGGY [*coldly*]. *Which* Mr. Lewis?

BROWN. Tad Lewis.

PEGGY. He ain't home. He went out some time ago.

BROWN. That's unfortunate. I have some exceptionally private [*he smiles*] business with him. [*He thinks a moment.*] If you don't mind, I'll wait for him to return. [*He seats himself by the center table in a very cocksure manner.*] Warm night, isn't it?

PEGGY [*looking hopelessly at* POLLY]. Yes—yes, *very* warm.

BROWN. Looks as if we might have a thunder shower.

PEGGY. Y-yes—[*a pause*]. I'm—I'm afraid you'll have to wait a long time for my brother, Mr—?

BROWN. Brown.

PEGGY. I'm afraid you'll have to wait a long time, Mr. Brown, 'cause Tad's gone to a dance an' he won't be home till very late.

BROWN. Well, I've really *got* to see him! It's about the per— [*He catches himself.*]

PEGGY [*jumping on it*]. About the what? I—I didn't quite understand you.

BROWN. It was nothing, Miss Lewis. Just a slight twist of the tongue. My business concerns your brother exclusively. I know he doesn't want it known yet. It would be very embarrassing to him.

PEGGY AND POLLY. Embarrassin'?

BROWN. Yes. So you say he won't be home until very late?

PEGGY. Sure. He always stays *awful* late at dances—two, three, an' sometimes four o'clock—once even five!

POLLY. *Six,* one time, Peggy, an' it's the same kind of a dance he's at now. The Eagles! They *always* keep goin' till six.

BROWN. Well then, I'll have to catch him later. [*He rises and the girls give little inaudible sighs of relief.*] I might stroll over to The Eagles!

PEGGY. Oh—oh, maybe it *ain't* The Eagles. Maybe it's some other dance. I—I don't know for sure *what* dance it was.

BROWN. Well, I'll take a chance. [*He opens the door and turns, bowing to the girls.*] Good evening, young ladies.

POLLY. Good evenin'. [*She stands in front of the davenport, clutching the big chair.*]

PEGGY [*as* BROWN *turns to go*]. He—he ain't done nothin' *wrong,* Mr. Brown? [BROWN *is about to reply when* TAD *sits up, blinking and mumbling.*]

TAD. Gee, I fell asleep, didn't I? [*He stretches.*]

POLLY [*fiercely*]. Tad, lay down!

TAD. Lay down, nothin'. I'm gonna watch you cut the cake an' then— [*Suddenly seeing* BROWN.] What's the row?

BROWN [*puzzled, looking from one girl to the other*]. Say, what are you two girls giving me? [*Pointing.*] There's your brother, now.

PEGGY [*dazed*]. Oh, is it?—Oh, yes!

TAD [*coming forward*]. Hello, Brown.

BROWN [*with a sneer*]. Hello, Lewis. You're home *early* from The Eagles. Evidently it was over before *six.*

TAD. What are you talkin' about? [*Looking at the girls.*] Well, I suppose you told 'em everything?

BROWN. No, not a word!

PEGGY [*violently*]. No, not a word, you big—big—*thing* you! [*To* TAD.] Tad Lewis, you ain't of age yet. I'm the Maw of this house *now!* You don't take a step from this room till you tell me what's up? [*She grabs his arm.*]

TAD [*pulling away*]. Let me alone! I guess I earn my own money! I guess I can do what I please! Let go my arm!

PEGGY. I won't let you go! You tell me what's up!

BROWN. Now, Miss Lewis—

PEGGY [*turning on him*]. You keep your smooth, oily words to yourself! This here's *my* pie an' *you* keep out of it! He's *my* brother, see?

POLLY. Tad, tell us what's up, won't you? We won't be sore.

TAD. Let me alone, both of you! I've got *private* business with Mr. Brown. Ain't that enough? We're goin' outside to talk it over. I'll be back when I'm good an' ready, understand? [*He goes out quickly, and* BROWN *hurries after him.*]

POLLY [*following weakly to the door*]. Tad! Tad!

PEGGY [*firmly*]. Hold yourself together. We ain't beat yet by a long shot. I'll follow 'em an' see where— [*She is struggling into a long coat and a hat when the phone rings.*] Answer it, Polly.

POLLY [*shaking all over*]. Hello. Yes. Yes. Oh, hello, Rosie. Oh, is that so? Oh, I'm *so* glad. Yes. Yes. *Brown?* Oh, yes. Good-bye— [*She turns dizzily, her hand before her eyes.*]

PEGGY [*swallowing hard*]. Well?

POLLY. It's true.

PEGGY. What?

POLLY. He's stolen 'em!

PEGGY. How do you know?

POLLY. Rosie just told me that Detective Brown's after the thief. [*Pointing to the door.*] His name is Brown.

PEGGY [*slowly*]. Yes, his name is Brown.

POLLY [*sobbing*]. I can't believe it. I can't—I can't—He's only a little boy—just a kid.

PEGGY. I'm gonna find him— [*She exits, quickly.*]

POLLY [*rushing to the door*]. Peggy!—Peg— [*She turns back and puts her hands up to her throat. She feels the pearls. She violently wrenches them from her neck and throws them to the floor.*] I hate you! I hate you! I hate you! [*She walks up and down, clasping and unclasping her hands. Then she drops into a chair by the table and buries her face in her hands. A long pause. Then footsteps are heard in the hall.* POLLY *starts up and runs to the door. Enter* PEGGY.]

POLLY. Did you find 'em?

PEGGY. No. They ain't in sight, any place. I've a good mind to ring up the police station.

POLLY. Oh, don't do that! [*Phone rings sharply.*]

PEGGY. I'll take it. [*At phone.*] Hello—hello— Yes. Yes. Oh, yes. Oh, he's found the thief, has he? Takin' him to the police station now? Well, that's quick work. This guy Brown's some detective, ain't he? [*With sarcasm.*] Thanks for your kindness, Rosie. [*She hangs up without saying good-bye.*]

PEGGY. Brown's found the thief.

POLLY. Rosie didn't—didn't mention his name?

PEGGY. No. Guess she didn't know it.

POLLY. But I bet she's makin' a good guess! Oh, I never thought there was such mean people in the whole world.

PEGGY. Oh, it's hard when it catches you this way. [*She walks slowly down to center table.*] It ain't no use tryin' to cheat ourselves any longer, Polly. Tad *musta* stole those pearls. My job as a Maw to us three has failed. [*She forces back the tears.*] Where are they?

POLLY. What?

PEGGY. The pearls.

POLLY [*pointing to the floor*]. There. I couldn't keep 'em near me.

PEGGY. They won't get 'em back again! I'll smash 'em into a million pieces! [*She steps toward them.*]

POLLY. Listen!— [*There is a pause. A quick step and a low whistle is heard outside.*]

POLLY [*with a great cry of joy*]. It's Tad! It's Tad! [*She rushes to the door.*]

PEGGY. Yes, it's Tad! [*She too rushes. Enter* TAD, *whistling a gay tune. His sisters, one on each side of him, throw their arms around his neck.*]

PEGGY. Tad, Tad, you ain't!—

TAD [*almost smothered*]. Gosh, what sudden affection! Didn't I tell you I was broke? You can't worm a cent out of me!

PEGGY. Where's Brown?

TAD. Went home, of course. Nice feller, ain't he?

POLLY. What does he do for a livin', Tad?

TAD. He works.

PEGGY. Doin' what?

TAD. Doin' everybody.

POLLY. Aw, cut the humor, Tad. What does he do?

TAD. He just did *me!*

PEGGY. What for?

TAD. Well, if you two girls ain't as nosey as deacons! You can't let a poor feller have a minute's rest. Brown sells Telka pearls on the instalment plan.

POLLY AND PEGGY. What?

TAD. Yes, Miss Sherlock Holmes an' Miss Watson, I must own up. You have hounded me till I cannot rest. This is my bitter story. I bought Polly's pearls on the instalment plan an' I just gave Brown the last payment.

POLLY [*laughing hysterically*]. Oh, Tad, you're the best little brother in the whole world. [*She tries to get at the pearls.*]

TAD. Thanks, Miss Watson. [*He bows low.*]

PEGGY. They found the guy who stole them pearls, Tad. Detective Brown found him. They're takin' him to the police station now.

TAD. Yeh? [*He starts to walk down to the table and nearly steps on the pearls. He stoops and picks them up.*] Hello, look at this! *Nice* treatment! Talk about chuckin' pearls before swine—

POLLY [*confused*]. Oh, Tad, I'm *so* sorry. I—I—

TAD. Say, there's something funny about this—

PEGGY. You see, we—we—

TAD [*seeing light*]. Well, I'll be damned!

PEGGY. Tad!

TAD. Well, I'll be damned! So you thought I *stole* these pearls! Well, I'll be damned!

PEGGY. Tad, if you don't stop swearin' I'll spank you good. Yes, we've got to own up. We was crazy enough to think that you stole 'em.

TAD. Well, I'll be damned! An' I've been buyin' 'em for nearly a year! [*He walks to center table, throws the pearls down on it, and seats himself beside the table. He stares straight before him, his mouth a straight, hard line. A pause. Silence.* PEGGY *whispers to* POLLY. POLLY *comes to table timidly, and puts on the pearls. She seats herself on the opposite side of the table and flashes the pearls at* TAD, *but he stares straight ahead.* PEGGY *goes into the kitchen.*]

POLLY [*softly*]. Tad. [*No answer.*] Tad, don't they shine swell? [*Still no answer.*] Tad, I've got a secret to tell you. [*Continued silence.*] Aw, you're a regular old hard-shelled crab, that's what you are! [*She still flashes the pearls. Enter* PEGGY. *She carries the birthday cake. The eighteen candles are burning brightly. She sets the cake on the table between* TAD *and* POLLY.]

TAD [*aghast*]. Well, what do you know about that?

PEGGY [*putting her hand on* TAD'S *shoulder*]. Come, come, Tad boy, let's give Polly a happy birthday. We didn't mean nothin'. I just thought on account of that Casey boy—

Well, everything looked so strange an' all. You know they even hang men on circumstantial evidence. Come, come, Tad boy. [*He doesn't answer.*]

POLLY [*leaning across table*]. Aw, Tad, don't keep on lookin' like that. The detective's name was Brown, too. Can't you see why we was scared? Aw, Tad, Maw always forgave us, no matter *what* we done. Try to be like Maw. [*At that,* TAD's *face softens. His eyes fill with tears. He turns to* POLLY.]

TAD [*smiling*]. Gee, Miss Watson, the pearls look simply swell. [*He turns to* PEGGY.] Miss Sherlock Holmes, this is indeed a spread for a king.

PEGGY [*to* POLLY]. Miss Watson, you may now blow out the candles an' wish while you're blowin' 'em. [POLLY *solemnly blows out the candles.*]

PEGGY. There. The years are all blown away.

TAD. Did you wish, Polly? I bet you forgot.

POLLY. Not much I didn't. I wished that—

PEGGY. Don't tell us. It's bad luck.

POLLY. That's right, but it ain't hard to guess.

TAD. Now cut it, Poll. I'm hungry.

POLLY [*taking up knife*]. You're *always* hungry! [*Telephone rings. Both girls start.*]

PEGGY [*going to it*]. Hello—hello—yes. Yes. Yes, Rosie. What? The thief is—Who? The *Casey* boy! Oh, yeh. Yeh. Thanks, Rosie. You what? You're glad it wasn't Tad? Yeh, so am I! Good-bye, Rosie. [*Hangs up receiver and slowly turns.*] The Casey boy stole the pearls. Well, ain't life funny! [*She starts down to the table as the curtain falls.*]

[CURTAIN.]

BOOKS AND ARTICLES USEFUL IN THE STUDY OF "PEARLS"

George Jean Nathan: "Blooms of Spring," in *Arts and Decoration,* Vol. XXXIII, No. 2, p. 81. New York, 1925.

Burton Rascoe: "Contemporary Reminiscences," in *Arts and Decoration,* Vol. XXXIII, No. 2, p. 36. New York, 1925.

R. Dana Skinner: "When Tragedy and Comedy Meet," in *The Independent,* Vol. CXIV, p. 644. New York, 1925.

Dan Totheroh: *In the Darkness* in *Ten Minute Plays,* edited by Pierre Loving. New York [1923].

* *The Stolen Prince* in *The Drama,* Vol. XV, pp. 30-32. Chicago, 1924.

* *A Tune of a Tune* in *The Drama,* Vol. X, pp. 184-188. Chicago, 1920.

* *While the Mushrooms Bubble. A Fantasy.* In *Poet Lore,* Vol. XXXII, pp. 251-261. Boston, 1921.

* *The Widdy's Mite* in *The Drama,* Vol. XV, pp. 13-15. Chicago, 1922.

Wild Birds. Garden City and New York, 1925.

* For high school reference.

THE DEAR DEPARTED[1]

A Comedy in One Act

By

STANLEY HOUGHTON

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INTRODUCTION

THE DEAR DEPARTED

Stanley Houghton's career and reputation as a playwright are closely connected with the history of the Repertory Theatre movement. The meaning of this movement is now generally understood. " Repertory has established itself," to quote Frank Vernon's serviceable definition, " as the name of the permanent local theatre with a permanent company reviving good plays and producing good plays with a little more regard for their artistic values than for their immediate drawing power." Some of the bravest names in the history of the one-act play, and, in general, in the annals of contemporary drama, are associated with repertory theatres here and abroad. Synge's *Riders to the Sea* was produced by the Irish National Theatre Society, predecessors of the Abbey Theatre Company, in Dublin; Chapin was connected as a producer with the short-lived Glasgow Repertory Theatre and had pieces done at Manchester; Brighouse, Houghton, and Monkhouse were the ornaments of the Gaiety Theatre in Manchester; John Drinkwater's *Abraham Lincoln* was first acted at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre, and Eugene O'Neill was introduced to American audiences by the Provincetown Players. Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World,* Houghton's *Hindle Wakes,* Brighouse's *Hobson's Choice,* and Drinkwater's *Abraham Lincoln* have been called " the four pinnacles of Repertory " in Great Britain. Before 1914

repertory theatres enjoyed a measure of popularity in the English provinces. Since the close of the Great War, the fortunes of repertory have waned, and some of the most important theatres, like those in Birmingham and Manchester, have gone out of existence. It may be said, in parenthesis, however, that in America the movement shows renewed vigor, especially in New York. In this city, during the winter of 1926-1927, there were at least three genuine repertory companies, those playing at the Neighborhood Playhouse, at the Theatre Guild, and at the Fourteenth Street Theatre.

The repertory theatre for which Stanley Houghton wrote was, as has been mentioned, the Gaiety Theatre, in Manchester, now converted to other uses. Repertory, started in 1908 at the Midland Theatre, was subsidized by the same Miss Horniman who had, in 1904, come so generously to the rescue of the Irish National Dramatic Company. Houghton's *The Dear Departed,* included in this collection of one-act plays, was the first of his pieces to be shown at the Gaiety Theatre. There it had its first production on November 2, 1908. It was used as a curtain-raiser to Shaw's *Widowers' Houses.* On the original program Houghton printed a note to the effect that he had derived the germinal idea from de Maupassant; the obligation was so vague, however, that this statement does not now appear again in connection with the play. As C. E. Montague, the brilliant critic of *The Manchester Guardian,* wrote: "These things are a kind of dramatic common or open space. Every dramatist, new and old, has royal rights on them. What matters is the way the rights are used. And Mr. Houghton, in using them, shows a pretty turn of observation, a fresh, quick relish for the harsh humors of the situation; and

also a capital sense of theatrical values."[1] *The Dear Departed* became a popular item on Miss Horniman's bills. Its vogue, moreover, was not confined to Manchester. It ran from May, 1913, to February, 1914, at the Criterion Theatre in London. In 1911, *The Dear Departed* was translated into French by Louis Pennequin as *Défunt Merry*. The nation that produced *Tartuffe* could relish Houghton's miniature study of hypocrisy. *The Dear Departed* has been conspicuously popular with amateurs both in England and in the United States.

The organization of a repertory company in Manchester changed the course of the career of more than one writing man in Manchester. Plays introducing types of northern characters were welcomed by Miss Horniman and her producing staff. This hospitality resulted ultimately in the development of a group of local playwrights, known now as the "Manchester School," the leaders among whom were Stanley Houghton, Allan Monkhouse, and Harold Brighouse. The two latter dramatists have survived Houghton, who died in 1913, in his thirty-third year.

A journalist who wrote of Houghton in this year described him as "tall, thin, and fair, with deep-set eyes and a gentle voice, speaking carefully chosen words." Max Beerbohm's well known caricature of the author of *The Dear Departed* emphasizes this slenderness and delicacy of physique.

William Stanley Houghton, as he was christened, was born on February 22, 1881, at Ashton-upon-Mersey, in Cheshire. His family was of old Lancashire stock. As a result of the frequent family changes of residence,

[1] Quoted on p. xli of Vol. I of Harold Brighouse's definitive edition of Houghton's *Works*. Mr. Brighouse's Introduction treats Houghton's life and writings authoritatively.

Houghton knew many schools. His last was the famous Manchester Grammar School, at which he was enrolled in 1896. A year later he entered his father's business as junior office boy. He remained in commerce till 1912, when his success as a playwright, especially the stir made by *Hindle Wakes,* encouraged him to make his avocation his vocation. Shortly before his death, Houghton removed from London to Paris and settled down there to the " ardors and endurances " of letters as a profession. He was part of a small, happy coterie, his especial intimate being the American, Edward Knoblock. It was while on a visit to another American playwright, Edward Sheldon, then settled in Venice, that Houghton's fatal illness became threatening. But his fate was not Browning's: he survived the journey back to England and died in his own north country.

There is no better apprenticeship for the playwright than a practical knowledge of the requirements of the stage, and there is no easier way of gaining such insight than actual presence on the boards. Stanley Houghton was an amateur actor. Between the years 1901 and 1912 he took over seventy parts. Toward the end of this period he created several rôles in his own plays, the most important of these impersonations being that of James Henry Kennion in *The Younger Generation.*

Other activities of Houghton's contributed also to his first-hand knowledge of stage technique. For some months, for example, he acted as unpaid dramatic critic of minor attractions for the *Manchester City News.* Then later, from 1907 to 1911, when he was contributing from time to time to *The Manchester Guardian,* he reviewed plays in addition to writing book reviews and special articles.

Though Houghton retired from business early in 1912

—his first great success, *The Younger Generation,* had been produced by Miss Horniman's company in 1910—to devote himself to literature, he had been writing for amateurs long before his success in the professional theatre caused him to rearrange his life. First (1902) there had been miniature comic operas and farces, and later more farces and melodramas—the titles of which, *After Naseby, The Last Shot,* and *The Blue Phial,* are said to suggest their character.

The methods of the successful author are of interest to the student and generally, too, even to the desultory reader. Harold Brighouse, Houghton's friend and biographer, details the stages of Houghton's authorship thus: In the beginning was the idea for the play. This idea, falling upon fertile ground in the playwright's mind, fastened itself in his consciousness till its growth became apparent. In a penny notebook which he habitually carried with him, Houghton would then record " constructive points and scraps of dialogue." From these notes he built up a " complete scenario. . . . He knew," according to Mr. Brighouse, " the full course of his play before he wrote a line of dialogue." One other detail of his method of composition is of interest. In two instances Houghton expanded one-act plays to full-length plays—a general procedure of which, it will be noted, Eugene O'Neill is sharply critical. The subject treated by Houghton in *The Fifth Commandment* he handled later in the long play, *The Perfect Cure.* Similarly, the situation in *Fancy Free* was prolonged in *Partners.*

An intelligent playwright in the first decade of the twentieth century could hardly fail to come under the spell of the dramatic fashions of his day. Wilde's guile in the matter of dialogue, Shaw's assaults on orthodoxy, Ibsen's preoccupation with ponderable ideas, as well as

his tight construction, have all left their traces on the content, the manner, and the structure of Houghton's plays. Houghton has even gained from one critic the sobriquet of " a ruthless Lancashire Ibsen."

Five of Houghton's plays are concerned primarily with the relations between the young and the old. These are *The Younger Generation, The Fifth Commandment* and its expanded version, *The Perfect Cure, Hindle Wakes,* and *Independent Means.* As the critic in *The Athenæum* wrote in 1914: " *The Younger Generation* held its own on the stage at the beginning of a century which will be marked by a readjustment of the relative positions of parents and their children." Mrs. Hannah Kennion, the grandmother in this play, represents thus the slant of an older generation:

> There's original sin in every young man and young woman, and it's got to be stamped out of them. Yes, scourged out of them with whips, and burnt out of them with fire, if need be.

At the time of Houghton's death, he had written a fragment, six chapters, of a novel to be called *Life.* Narrative sketches and short-stories also are found among his literary remains. These latter are in the best tradition of *The Manchester Guardian* and seem to careful observers of his work to have held promise of greatness in narrative writing. Upon what the relative merits of Houghton as dramatist and Houghton as writer of fiction might have been, it is unprofitable to speculate.

THE DEAR DEPARTED

CHARACTERS

MRS. SLATER, MRS. JORDAN } *Sisters.*
HENRY SLATER, BEN JORDAN } *Their Husbands.*
VICTORIA SLATER, *a girl of ten.*
ABEL MERRYWEATHER

The action takes place in a provincial town on a Saturday afternoon.

Produced at the Gaiety Theatre, Manchester, by Miss Horniman's Company on November 2, 1908, with the following cast:

MRS. SLATER	Ada King
VICTORIA SLATER	Enid Meek
HENRY SLATER	Henry Austin
MRS. JORDAN	Louise Holbrook
BEN JORDAN	Joseph A. Keogh
ABEL MERRYWEATHER	Edward Landor

The scene is the sitting-room of a small house in a lower middle-class district of a provincial town. On the spectator's left is the window, with the blinds down. A sofa is in front of it. On his right is a fireplace with an armchair by it. In the middle of the wall facing the spectator is the door into the passage. To the left of the door a cheap, shabby chest of drawers, to the right a sideboard. In the middle of the room is the table, with chairs round it. Ornaments and a cheap American clock are on the

mantelpiece, in the hearth a kettle. By the sideboard a pair of gaudy new carpet slippers. The table is partly laid for tea, and the necessaries for the meal are on the sideboard, as also are copies of an evening paper and of "Tit-Bits" and "Pearson's Weekly." Turning to the left through the door takes you to the front door; to the right, upstairs. In the passage a hatstand is visible.

When the curtain rises MRS. SLATER *is seen laying the table. She is a vigorous, plump, red-faced, vulgar woman prepared to do any amount of straight talking to get her own way. She is in black, but not in complete mourning. She listens a moment and then goes to the window, opens it, and calls into the street.*

MRS. SLATER [*sharply*]. Victoria, Victoria! D'ye hear? Come in, will you? [MRS. SLATER *closes window and puts the blind straight and then returns to her work at the table.* VICTORIA, *a precocious girl of ten, dressed in colours, enters.*]

MRS S. I'm amazed at you, Victoria; I really am. How you can be gallivanting about in the street with your grandfather lying dead and cold upstairs I don't know. Be off now, and change your dress before your Aunt Elizabeth and your Uncle Ben come. It would never do for them to find you in colours.

VICTORIA. What are they coming for? They haven't been here for ages.

MRS. S. They're coming to talk over poor grandpa's affairs. Your father sent them a telegram as soon as we found he was dead. [*A noise is heard.*] Good gracious, that's never them. [MRS. SLATER *hurries to the door and opens it.*] No, thank goodness! it's only your father. [HENRY SLATER, *a stooping, heavy man, with a drooping moustache, enters. He is wearing a black tail coat, grey trousers, a black tie, and a bowler hat. He carries a little paper parcel.*]

HENRY. Not come yet, eh?

MRS. S. You can see they haven't, can't you? Now, Vic-

toria, be off upstairs and that quick. Put your white frock on with a black sash. [VICTORIA *goes out.*]

MRS. S. [*to* HENRY]. I'm not satisfied, but it's the best we can do till our new black's ready, and Ben and Elizabeth will never have thought about mourning yet, so we'll outshine them there. [HENRY *sits in the armchair by the fire.*] Get your boots off, Henry; Elizabeth's that prying she notices the least speck of dirt.

HENRY. I'm wondering if they'll come at all. When you and Elizabeth quarrelled she said she'd never set foot in your house again.

MRS. S. She'll come fast enough after her share of what grandfather left. You know how hard she can be when she likes. Where she gets it from I can't tell. [MRS. SLATER *unwraps the parcel* HENRY *has brought. It contains sliced tongue, which she puts on a dish on the table.*]

HENRY. I suppose it's in the family.

MRS. S. What do you mean by that, Henry Slater?

HENRY. I was referring to your father, not to you. Where are my slippers?

MRS. S. In the kitchen; but you want a new pair, those old ones are nearly worn out. [*Nearly breaking down.*] You don't seem to realize what it's costing me to bear up like I am doing. My heart's fit to break when I see the little trifles that belonged to grandfather lying around, and think he'll never use them again. [*Briskly.*] Here! you'd better wear these slippers of grandfather's now. It's lucky he'd just got a new pair.

HENRY. They'll be very small for me, my dear.

MRS. S. They'll stretch, won't they? I'm not going to have them wasted. [*She has finished laying the table.*] Henry, I've been thinking about that bureau of grandfather's that's in his bedroom. You know I always wanted to have it after he died.

HENRY. You must arrange with Elizabeth when you're dividing things up.

MRS. S. Elizabeth's that sharp she'll see I'm after it, and

she'll drive a hard bargain over it. Eh, what it is to have a low, money-grubbing spirit!

HENRY. Perhaps she's got her eye on the bureau as well.

MRS. S. She's never been here since grandfather bought it. If it was only down here instead of in his room, she'd never guess it wasn't our own.

HENRY [*startled*]. Amelia! [*He rises.*]

MRS. S. Henry, why shouldn't we bring that bureau down here now? We could do it before they come.

HENRY [*stupefied*]. I wouldn't care to.

MRS. S. Don't look so daft. Why not?

HENRY. It doesn't seem delicate, somehow.

MRS. S. We could put that shabby old chest of drawers upstairs where the bureau is now. Elizabeth could have that and welcome. I've always wanted to get rid of it. [*She points to the drawers.*]

HENRY. Suppose they come when we're doing it.

MRS. S. I'll fasten the front door. Get your coat off, Henry; we'll change it. [MRS. SLATER *goes out to fasten the front door.* HENRY *takes his coat off.* MRS. SLATER *reappears.*]

MRS. S. I'll run up and move the chairs out of the way. [VICTORIA *appears, dressed according to her mother's instructions.*]

VIC. Will you fasten my frock up the back, mother?

MRS. S. I'm busy; get your father to do it. [MRS. SLATER *hurries upstairs, and* HENRY *fastens the frock.*]

VIC. What have you got your coat off for, father?

HENRY. Mother and me is going to bring grandfather's bureau down here.

VIC. [*after a moment's thought*]. Are we pinching it before Aunt Elizabeth comes?

HENRY [*shocked*]. No, my child. Grandpa gave it your mother before he died.

VIC. This morning?

HENRY. Yes.

VIC. Ah! He was drunk this morning.

HENRY. Hush; you mustn't ever say he was drunk, now. [HENRY *has fastened the frock, and* MRS. SLATER *appears carrying a handsome clock under her arm.*]

MRS. S. I thought I'd fetch this down as well. [*She puts it on the mantelpiece.*] Our clock's worth nothing and this always appealed to me.

VIC. That's grandpa's clock.

MRS. S. Chut! Be quiet! It's ours now. Come, Henry, lift your end. Victoria, don't breathe a word to your aunt about the clock and the bureau. [*They carry the chest of drawers through the doorway.*]

VIC [*to herself*]. I *thought* we'd pinched them. [*After a short pause there is a sharp knock at the front door.*]

MRS. S. [*from upstairs*]. Victoria, if that's your aunt and uncle you're not to open the door. [VICTORIA *peeps through the window.*]

VIC. Mother, it's them!

MRS. S. You're not to open the door till I come down. [*Knocking repeated.*] Let them knock away. [*There is a heavy bumping noise.*] Mind the wall, Henry. [HENRY *and* MRS. SLATER, *very hot and flushed, stagger in with a pretty old-fashioned bureau containing a locked desk. They put it where the chest of drawers was, and straighten the ornaments, etc. The knocking is repeated.*]

MRS. S. That was a near thing. Open the door, Victoria. Now, Henry, get your coat on. [*She helps him.*]

HENRY. Did we knock much plaster off the wall?

MRS. S. Never mind the plaster. Do I look all right? [*Straightening her hair at the glass.*] Just watch Elizabeth's face when she sees we're all in half mourning. [*Throwing him "Tit-Bits."*] Take this and sit down. Try and look as if we'd been waiting for them. [HENRY *sits in the armchair and* MRS. SLATER *left of table. They read ostentatiously.* VICTORIA *ushers in* BEN and MRS. JORDAN. *The latter is a stout, complacent woman with an impassive face and an irritating air of being always right. She is wearing a complete and deadly outfit of new mourning crowned by a great black hat*

with plumes. BEN *is also in complete new mourning, with black gloves and a band round his hat. He is rather a jolly little man, accustomed to be humorous, but at present trying to adapt himself to the regrettable occasion. He has a bright, chirpy little voice.* MRS. JORDAN *sails into the room and solemnly goes straight to* MRS. SLATER *and kisses her. The men shake hands.* MRS. JORDAN *kisses* HENRY. BEN *kisses* MRS. SLATER. *Not a word is spoken.* MRS. SLATER *furtively inspects the new mourning.*]

MRS. JORDAN. Well, Amelia, and so he's " gone " at last.

MRS. S. Yes, he's gone. He was seventy-two a fortnight last Sunday. [*She sniffs back a tear.* MRS. JORDAN *sits on the left of the table.* MRS. SLATER *on the right.* HENRY *in the armchair.* BEN *on the sofa with* VICTORIA *near him.*]

BEN [*chirpily*]. Now, Amelia, you mustn't give way. We've all got to die some time or other. It might have been worse.

MRS. S. I don't see how.

BEN. It might have been one of us.

HENRY. It's taken you a long time to get here, Elizabeth.

MRS. J. Oh, I couldn't do it. I really couldn't do it.

MRS. S. [*suspiciously*]. Couldn't do what?

MRS. J. I couldn't start without getting the mourning. [*Glancing at her sister.*]

MRS. S. We've ordered ours, you may be sure. [*Acidly.*] I never could fancy buying ready-made things.

MRS. J. No? For myself it's such a relief to get into the black. And now perhaps you'll tell us all about it. What did the doctor say?

MRS. S. Oh, he's not been near yet.

MRS. J. Not been near?

BEN [*in the same breath*]. Didn't you send for him at once?

MRS. S. Of course I did. Do you take me for a fool? I sent Henry at once for Dr. Pringle, but he was out.

BEN. You should have gone for another. Eh, Eliza?

MRS. J. Oh, yes. It's a fatal mistake.

MRS. S. Pringle attended him when he was alive and Pringle shall attend him when he's dead. That's professional etiquette.

BEN. Well, you know your own business best, but—

MRS. J. Yes—it's a fatal mistake.

MRS. S. Don't talk so silly, Elizabeth. What good could a doctor have done?

MRS. J. Look at the many cases of persons being restored to life hours after they were thought to be "gone."

HENRY. That's when they've been drowned. Your father wasn't drowned, Elizabeth.

BEN [*humorously*]. There wasn't much fear of that. If there was one thing he couldn't bear it was water. [*He laughs, but no one else does.*]

MRS. J. [*pained*]. Ben! [BEN *is crushed at once.*]

MRS. S. [*piqued*]. I'm sure he washed regularly enough.

MRS. J. If he did take a drop too much at times, we'll not dwell on that now.

MRS. S. Father had been "merry" this morning. He went out soon after breakfast to pay his insurance.

BEN. My word, it's a good thing he did.

MRS. J. He always was thoughtful in that way. He was too honourable to have "gone" without paying his premium.

MRS. S. Well, he must have gone round to the *Ring-o'-Bells* afterwards, for he came in as merry as a sandboy. I says, "We're only waiting Henry to start dinner." "Dinner," he says, "I don't want no dinner, I'm going to bed!"

BEN [*shaking his head*]. Ah! Dear, dear.

HENRY. And when I came in I found him undressed sure enough and snug in bed. [*He rises and stands on the hearth-rug.*]

MRS. J. [*definitely*]. Yes, he'd had a "warning." I'm sure of that. Did he know you?

HENRY. Yes. He spoke to me.

MRS. J. Did he say he'd had a "warning"?

HENRY. No. He said, "Henry, would you mind taking my boots off; I forgot before I got into bed."

MRS. J. He must have been wandering.

HENRY. No, he'd got 'em on all right.

MRS. S. And when we'd finished dinner I thought I'd take up a bit of something on a tray. He was lying there for all the world as if he was asleep, so I put the tray down on the bureau—[*correcting herself*] on the chest of drawers—and went to waken him. [*A pause.*] He was quite cold.

HENRY. Then I heard Amelia calling for me, and I ran upstairs.

MRS. S. Of course we could do nothing.

MRS. J. He was "gone"?

HENRY. There wasn't any doubt.

MRS. J. I always knew he'd go sudden in the end. [*A pause; they wipe their eyes and sniff back tears.*]

MRS. S. [*rising briskly at length; in a businesslike tone*]. Well, will you go up and look at him now, or shall we have tea?

MRS. J. What do you say, Ben?

BEN. I'm not particular.

MRS. J. [*surveying the table*]. Well, then, if the kettle's nearly ready, we may as well have tea first. [MRS. SLATER *puts the kettle on the fire and gets tea ready.*]

HENRY. One thing we may as well decide now; the announcement in the papers.

MRS. J. I was thinking of that. What would you put?

MRS. S. At the residence of his daughter, 235, Upper Cornback Street, etc.

HENRY. You wouldn't care for a bit of poetry?

MRS. J. I like "Never Forgotten." It's refined.

HENRY. Yes, but it's rather soon for that.

BEN. You couldn't very well have forgot him the day after.

MRS. S. I always fancy "A loving husband, a kind father, and a faithful friend."

BEN [*doubtfully*]. Do you think that's right?

HENRY. I don't think it matters whether it's right or not.

MRS. J. No, it's more for the look of the thing.

HENRY. I saw a verse in *The Evening News* yesterday.

Proper poetry it was. It rhymed. [*He gets the paper and reads.*]

Despised and forgotten by some you may be
But the spot that contains you is sacred to we.

MRS. J. That'll never do. You don't say "sacred to we."

HENRY. It's in the paper.

MRS. S. You wouldn't say it if you were speaking properly, but it's different in poetry.

HENRY. Poetic license, you know.

MRS. J. No, that'll never do. We want a verse that says how much we loved him and refers to all his good qualities and says what a heavy loss we've had.

MRS. S. You want a whole poem. That'll cost a good lot.

MRS. J. Well, we'll think about it after tea, and then we'll look through his bits of things and make a list of them. There's all the furniture in his room.

HENRY. There's no jewelry or valuables of that sort.

MRS. J. Except his gold watch. He promised that to our Jimmy.

MRS. S. Promised your Jimmy! I never heard of that.

MRS. J. Oh, but he did, Amelia, when he was living with us. He was very fond of Jimmy.

MRS. S. Well. [*Amazed.*] I don't know!

BEN. Anyhow, there's his insurance money. Have you got the receipt for the premium he paid this morning?

MRS. S. I've not seen it. [VICTORIA *jumps up from the sofa and comes behind the table.*]

VIC. Mother, I don't think grandpa went to pay his insurance this morning.

MRS. S. He went out.

VIC. Yes, but he didn't go into the town. He met old Mr. Tattersall down the street, and they went off past St. Philip's Church.

MRS. S. To the *Ring-o'-Bells,* I'll be bound.

BEN. The *Ring-o'-Bells?*

MRS. S. That public-house that John Shorrock's widow keeps. He is always hanging about there. Oh, if he hasn't paid it—

BEN. Do you think he hasn't paid it? Was it overdue?

MRS. S. I should think it was overdue.

MRS. J. Something tells me he's not paid it. I've a "warning," I know it; he's not paid it.

BEN. The drunken old beggar.

MRS. J. He's done it on purpose, just to annoy us.

MRS. S. After all I've done for him, having to put up with him in the house these three years. It's nothing short of swindling.

MRS. J. I had to put up with him for five years.

MRS. S. And you were trying to turn him over to us all the time.

HENRY. But we don't know for certain that he's not paid the premium.

MRS. J. I do. It's come over me all at once that he hasn't.

MRS. S. Victoria, run upstairs and fetch that bunch of keys that's on your grandpa's dressing table.

VIC. [*timidly*]. In grandpa's room?

MRS. S. Yes.

VIC. I—I don't like to.

MRS. S. Don't talk so silly. There's no one can hurt you. [VICTORIA *goes out reluctantly.*] We'll see if he's locked the receipt up in the bureau.

BEN. In where? In this thing? [*He rises and examines it.*]

MRS. J. [*also rising*]. Where did you pick that up, Amelia? It's new since last I was here. [*They examine it closely.*]

MRS. S. Oh—Henry picked it up one day.

MRS. J. I like it. It's artistic. Did you buy it at an auction?

HENRY. Eh? Where did I buy it, Amelia?

MRS. J. Yes, at an auction.

BEN [*disparagingly*]. Oh, second-hand.

MRS. J. Don't show your ignorance, Ben. All artistic

things are second-hand. Look at those old masters. [VICTORIA *returns very scared. She closes the door after her.*]

VIC. Mother! Mother!

MRS. S. What is it, child?

VIC. Grandpa's getting up.

BEN. What?

MRS. S. What do you say?

VIC. Grandpa's getting up.

MRS. J. The child's crazy.

MRS. S. Don't talk so silly. Don't you know your grandpa's dead?

VIC. No, no; he's getting up. I saw him. [*They are transfixed with amazement;* BEN *and* MRS. JORDAN *left of table;* VICTORIA *clings to* MRS. SLATER, *right of table;* HENRY *near fireplace.*]

MRS. J. You'd better go up and see for yourself, Amelia.

MRS. S. Here—come with me, Henry. [HENRY *draws back terrified.*]

BEN [*suddenly*]. Hist! Listen. [*They look at the door. A slight chuckling is heard outside. The door opens, revealing an old man clad in a faded but gay dressing-gown. He is in his stockinged feet. Although over seventy he is vigorous and well coloured; his bright, malicious eyes twinkle under his heavy, reddish-grey eyebrows. He is obviously either grandfather* ABEL MERRYWEATHER *or else his ghost.*]

ABEL. What's the matter with little Vicky? [*He sees* BEN *and* MRS. JORDAN.] Hello! What brings you here? How's yourself, Ben? [ABEL *thrusts his hand at* BEN, *who skips back smartly and retreats with* MRS. JORDAN *to a safe distance below the sofa.*]

MRS. S. [*approaching* ABEL *gingerly*]. Grandfather, is that you? [*She pokes him with her hand to see if he is solid.*]

ABEL. Of course it's me. Don't do that, 'Melia. What the devil do you mean by this tomfoolery?

MRS. S. [*to the others*]. He's not dead.

BEN. Doesn't seem like it.

ABEL [*irritated by the whispering*]. You've kept away long

enough, Lizzie; and now you've come you don't seem overpleased to see me.

MRS. J. You took us by surprise, father. Are you keeping quite well?

ABEL [*trying to catch the words*]. Eh? What?

MRS. J. Are you quite well?

ABEL. Ay, I'm right enough but for a bit of a headache. I wouldn't mind betting that I'm not the first in this house to be carried to the cemetery. I always think Henry there looks none too healthy.

MRS. J. Well I never! [ABEL *crosses to the armchair and* HENRY *gets out of his way to the front of the table.*]

ABEL. 'Melia, what the dickens did I do with my new slippers?

MRS. S. [*confused*]. Aren't they by the hearth, grandfather?

ABEL. I don't see them. [*Observing* HENRY *trying to remove the slippers.*] Why, you've got 'em on, Henry.

MRS. S. [*promptly*]. I told him to put them on to stretch them, they were that new and hard. Now, Henry. [MRS. SLATER *snatches the slippers from* HENRY *and gives them to* ABEL, *who puts them on and sits in armchair.*]

MRS. J. [*to* BEN]. Well, I don't call that delicate, stepping into a dead man's shoes in such haste. [HENRY *goes up to the window and pulls up the blind.* VICTORIA *runs across to* ABEL *and sits on the floor at his feet.*]

VIC. Oh, grandpa, I'm so glad you're not dead.

MRS. S. [*in a vindictive whisper*]. Hold your tongue, Victoria.

ABEL. Eh? What's that? Who's gone dead?

MRS. S. [*loudly*]. Victoria says she's sorry about your head.

ABEL. Ah, thank you, Vicky, but I'm feeling better.

MRS. S. [*to* MRS. J.]. He's so fond of Victoria.

MRS. J. [*to* MRS. S.]. Yes; he's fond of our Jimmy, too.

MRS. S. You'd better ask him if he promised your Jimmy his gold watch.

MRS. J. [*disconcerted*]. I couldn't just now. I don't feel equal to it.

ABEL. Why, Ben, you're in mourning! And Lizzie too. And 'Melia, and Henry, and little Vicky! Who's gone dead? It's some one in the family. [*He chuckles.*]

MRS. S. No one you know, father. A relation of Ben's.

ABEL. And what relation of Ben's?

MRS. S. His brother.

BEN [*to* MRS S.]. Dang it, I never had one.

ABEL. Dear, dear. And what was his name, Ben?

BEN [*at a loss*]. Er—er. [*He crosses to front of table.*]

MRS. S. [*R. of table, prompting*]. Frederick.

MRS. J. [*L. of table, prompting*]. Albert.

BEN. Er—Fred—Alb—Isaac.

ABEL. Isaac? And where did your brother Isaac die?

BEN. In—er—in Australia.

ABEL. Dear, dear. He'd be older than you, eh?

BEN. Yes, five year.

ABEL. Ay, ay. Are you going to the funeral?

BEN. Oh, yes.

MRS. S. AND MRS. J. No, no.

BEN. No, of course not. [*He retires to the left.*]

ABEL [*rising*]. Well, I suppose you've only been waiting for me to begin tea. I'm feeling hungry.

MRS. S. [*taking up the kettle*]. I'll make tea.

ABEL. Come along, now; sit you down and let's be jolly. [*Abel sits at the head of the table, facing spectators.* BEN *and* MRS. JORDAN *on the left.* VICTORIA *brings a chair and sits by* ABEL. MRS. SLATER *and* HENRY *sit on the right. Both the women are next to* ABEL.]

MRS. S. Henry, give grandpa some tongue.

ABEL. Thank you. I'll make a start. [*He helps himself to bread and butter.* HENRY *serves the tongue and* MRS. SLATER *pours out tea. Only* ABEL *eats with any heartiness.*]

BEN. Glad to see you've got an appetite, Mr. Merryweather, although you've not been so well.

ABEL. Nothing serious. I've been lying down for a bit.

MRS. S. Been to sleep, grandfather?

ABEL. No, I've not been to sleep.

MRS. S. AND HENRY. Oh!

ABEL [*eating and drinking*]. I can't exactly call everything to mind, but I remember I was a bit dazed-like. I couldn't move an inch, hand or foot.

BEN. And could you see and hear, Mr. Merryweather?

ABEL. Yes, but I don't remember seeing anything particular. Mustard, Ben. [BEN *passes the mustard.*]

MRS. S. Of course not, grandfather. It was all your fancy. You must have been asleep.

ABEL [*snappishly*]. I tell you I wasn't asleep, 'Melia. Damn it, I ought to know.

MRS. J. Didn't you see Henry or Amelia come into the room?

ABEL [*scratching his head*]. Now let me think—

MRS. S. I wouldn't press him, Elizabeth. Don't press him.

HENRY. No. I wouldn't worry him.

ABEL [*suddenly recollecting*]. Ay, begad! 'Melia and Henry, what the devil did you mean by shifting my bureau out of my bedroom? [HENRY *and* MRS. SLATER *are speechless.*] D'you hear me? Henry! 'Melia!

MRS. J. What bureau was that, father?

ABEL. Why, my bureau, the one I bought—

MRS. J. [*pointing to the bureau*]. Was it that one, father?

ABEL. Ah, that's it. What's it doing here? Eh? [*A pause. The clock on the mantelpiece strikes six. Everyone looks at it.*] Drat me if that isn't my clock, too. What the devil's been going on in this house? [*A slight pause.*]

BEN. Well, I'll be hanged.

MRS. J. [*rising*]. I'll tell you what's been going on in this house, father. Nothing short of robbery.

MRS. S. Be quiet, Elizabeth.

MRS. J. I'll not be quiet. Oh, I call it double-faced.

HENRY. Now, now, Elizabeth.

MRS. J. And you, too. Are you such a poor creature that you must do every dirty thing she tells you?

MRS. S. [*rising*]. Remember where you are, Elizabeth.

HENRY [*rising*]. Come, come. No quarrelling.

BEN [*rising*]. My wife's every right to speak her own mind.

MRS. S. Then she can speak it outside, not here.

ABEL [*rising. Thumping the table*]. Damn it all, will someone tell me what's been going on?

MRS. J. Yes, I will. I'll not see you robbed.

ABEL. Who's been robbing me?

MRS. J. Amelia and Henry. They've stolen your clock and bureau. [*Working herself up.*] They sneaked into your room like a thief in the night and stole them after you were dead.

HENRY AND MRS. S. Hush! Quiet, Elizabeth!

MRS. J. I'll not be stopped. After you were dead, I say.

ABEL. After who was dead?

MRS. J. You.

ABEL. But I'm not dead.

MRS. J. No, but they thought you were. [*A pause.* ABEL *gazes round at them.*]

ABEL. Oho! So that's why you're all in black today. You thought I was dead. [*He chuckles.*] That was a big mistake. [*He sits and resumes his tea.*]

MRS. S. [*sobbing*]. Grandfather.

ABEL. It didn't take you long to start dividing my things between you.

MRS. J. No, father; you mustn't think that. Amelia was simply getting hold of them on her own account.

ABEL. You always were a keen one, Amelia. I suppose you thought the will wasn't fair.

HENRY. Did you make a will?

ABEL. Yes, it was locked up in the bureau.

MRS. J. And what was in it, father?

ABEL. That doesn't matter now. I'm thinking of destroying it and making another.

MRS. S. [*sobbing*]. Grandfather, you'll not be hard on me.

ABEL. I'll trouble you for another cup of tea, 'Melia; two lumps and plenty of milk.

MRS. S. With pleasure, grandfather. [*She pours out the tea.*]

ABEL. I don't want to be hard on anyone. I'll tell you what I'm going to do. Since your mother died, I've lived part of the time with you, 'Melia, and part with you, Lizzie. Well, I shall make a new will, leaving all my bits of things to whoever I'm living with when I die. How does that strike you?

HENRY. It's a bit of a lottery, like.

MRS. J. And who do you intend to live with from now?

ABEL [*drinking his tea*]. I'm just coming to that.

MRS. J. You know, father, it's quite time you came to live with us again. We'd make you very comfortable.

MRS. S. No, he's not been with us as long as he was with you.

MRS. J. I may be wrong, but I don't think father will fancy living on with you after what's happened today.

ABEL. So you'd like to have me again, Lizzie?

MRS. J. You know we're ready for you to make your home with us for as long as you please.

ABEL. What do you say to that, 'Melia?

MRS. S. All I can say is that Elizabeth's changed her mind in the last two years. [*Rising.*] Grandfather, do you know what the quarrel between us was about?

MRS. J. Amelia, don't be a fool; sit down.

MRS. S. No, if I'm not to have him, you shan't either. We quarrelled because Elizabeth said she wouldn't take you off our hands at any price. She said she'd had enough of you to last a lifetime, and we'd got to keep you.

ABEL. It seems to me that neither of you has any cause to feel proud about the way you've treated me.

MRS. S. If I've done anything wrong, I'm sure I'm sorry for it.

MRS. J. And I can't say more than that, too.

ABEL. It's a bit late to say it, now. You neither of you cared to put up with me.

MRS. S. AND MRS. J. No, no, grandfather.

ABEL. Ay, you both say that because of what I've told you

about leaving my money. Well, since you don't want me I'll go to some one that does.

BEN. Come, Mr. Merryweather, you've got to live with one of your daughters.

ABEL. I'll tell you what I've got to do. On Monday next I've got to do three things. I've got to go to the lawyer's and alter my will; and I've got to go to the insurance office and pay my premium; and I've got to go to St. Philip's Church and get married.

BEN AND HENRY. What!

MRS. J. Get married!

MRS. S. He's out of his senses. [*General consternation.*]

ABEL. I say I'm going to get married.

MRS. S. Who to?

ABEL. To Mrs. John Shorrocks, who keeps the *Ring-o'-Bells*. We've had it fixed up a good while now, but I was keeping it for a pleasant surprise. [*He rises.*] I felt I was a bit of a burden to you, so I found someone who'd think it a pleasure to look after me. We shall be very glad to see you at the ceremony. [*He gets to the door.*] Till Monday then. Twelve o'clock at St. Philip's Church. [*Opening the door.*] It's a good thing you brought that bureau downstairs, 'Melia. It'll be handier to carry across to the *Ring-o'-Bells* on Monday. [*He goes out.*]

[CURTAIN.]

BOOKS AND ARTICLES HELPFUL IN THE STUDY OF "THE DEAR DEPARTED"

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The Athenæum: "The Works of Stanley Houghton," in Vol. CXLIV, p. 127. London, 1914.

A. L. Ellis: "Stanley Houghton: An Appreciation," *The English Review,* Vol. XVI, pp. 274-277. London, 1914.

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* Edward Storer: "Dramatists of To-day," *Living Age,* Vol. CCLXXX, pp. 413-417.

* Frank Vernon: *The Twentieth Century Theatre.* Boston and New York, 1925.

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* For high school reference.

THE POOR HOUSE[1]

By

LOUISE DRISCOLL

[1] Copyright, 1917. Applications for permission to perform this play should be addressed to the author, 67 Spring Street, Catskill, New York.

INTRODUCTION

THE POOR HOUSE

The Poor House plays in Miss Driscoll's neighborhood. Louise Driscoll was born in Poughkeepsie and she lives now in the town of Catskill, the scene of her brief drama. Miss Driscoll has been writing ever since she was sixteen and belongs to that choir of flushed, quiet singers, chiefly women, whose ecstasy has its source in the gardens and along the roadsides of their native landscape, whether that be the New England of Harriet Prescott Spofford, the Maryland of Lizette Woodworth Reese, or the Ohio of Edith M. Thomas.

Miss Driscoll's published volumes of verse are *The Garden of the West* (1922) and *Garden Grace* (1924). In 1914, she won a prize offered by *Poetry* with her poem *The Metal Cheeks*. A member of the Poetry Society of America, Miss Driscoll also serves the muse as chairman of the Committee on Poetry of the New York State Federation of Women's Clubs.

Miss Driscoll's lines are distinguished by a certain tranquil beauty which seems to mirror inner harmonies:

> Life has joy for any man
> Who lifts a hand to take it.
> Prism of the morning and
> The great sun that can make it.
> Rain upon a dusty leaf
> Can comfort even sullen grief.[1]

[1] Louise Driscoll, *Garden Grace*, New York, 1924, p. 40.

In general, both volumes of Miss Driscoll's verse, *The Garden of the West* and *Garden Grace,* exhibit such delicacy, grace, and poignancy as regularly characterize poets of gardens and green places.

The fragile grace and faint pathos of Miss Driscoll's verses are evident also in her one-act play. The character of Hattie Mason, the elderly spinster, is a memorable study in the impulses and accidents that end in disaster for the most innocent. In this neat little play, Hattie's fate is painfully and certainly foreshadowed from the moment that her neighbor, Lannie Frear, is drawn past the windows to her drab refuge from utter destitution.

THE POOR HOUSE

There's a white road lined with poplars
And the blue hills rise behind,
The fields lie green on either side
And the overseer's kind.

CHARACTERS

MISS HATTIE MASON, *an elderly spinster.*

WASH WYKOFF, MISS HATTIE'S *nephew, a boy of nineteen, half-educated, inefficient, restless, egotistic.*

MRS. JOHN TOMPKINS, *a middle-aged matron, kind, simple, rather dull and sentimental.*

LYSANDER WILLIAMS, *a truck farmer, a hard worker, moderately successful, a little pompous.*

The scene is the kitchen in MISS HATTIE'S *cottage in Jefferson, a suburb of Catskill-on-the-Hudson. At the left of the stage is a kitchen range, at the right a wooden table with drawers; at the back there is a door in the center and a window on each side of it. There are shelves across the windows, and on the shelves are potted plants, geraniums and coleus. There are a rocking chair with red cushions and one or two stiff wooden chairs. The room has an air of homely comfort and cheer.* WASH WYKOFF *is lounging in the rocking chair. He has one arm in a sling and a bandage around his forehead and plaster on his cheek. He moves stiffly.* MISS HATTIE *sits by the table, with her back to the window, peeling apples.* WASH *is reading a newspaper. He crushes the newspaper in his free hand as he turns to speak to* MISS HATTIE.

WASH. Have you read this thing?

MISS HATTIE. Yes, I read it.

WASH. Well, why don't you say something about it?

MISS HATTIE. I don't know what to say.

WASH. Well, it says it was all my fault, don't it? [MISS HATTIE *looks over the apples in the pan on the table, selects one, and begins to peel it. She does not answer.*]

WASH. Maybe you think it was my fault! Maybe everybody's against me! Huh!

MISS HATTIE. I don't know what to think about it. I don't think you had any right to try to run that automobile. It didn't belong to you, and you don't know how anyway.

WASH. What's the reason I don't know how?

MISS HATTIE. Well, you never learned; maybe that's one reason.

WASH. Ain't that just like a woman? Huh! I guess I'm just as smart as Tom Bridges, and he learned in one lesson. I've watched, and I know just what to do.

MISS HATTIE. You knew enough to run somebody else's brand new car into a telegraph pole.

WASH. That wasn't my fault. It would have been all right if the steering gear hadn't been out of order. How was I to know it was a defective gear? I ought to get damages.

MISS HATTIE [*covering the pan in which she has laid the peeled apples, rises, wiping her hands on a towel that hangs on the wall*]. You had no business to touch that car. It didn't belong to you.

WASH. Maybe you think I'm a thief! Think I was going to steal it, don't you? Well, I have to tell you, tell my own aunt, what I was doing. She don't believe in me. If I had relatives that took some interest in me, maybe I'd amount to something. I don't have any luck. [MISS HATTIE *takes paraphernalia for blacking the stove from the drawer of the table, and a pair of old gloves from a nail. Pulling the latter on her hands, she starts to polish the range.*]

WASH. It was all my bad luck, that's what it was. I'd been in to Mrs. Coats's with some groceries, and when I come

out there was Mr. Coats's new automobile standing right by the old grocery wagon. How I do hate that grocery wagon! Nice life for a young man, ain't it, driving a grocery wagon and lugging a pound of butter and a peck of potatoes into folks's kitchens all day long and having the women yell at you because you track in dirt!

MISS HATTIE. You'd ought to wipe your feet.

WASH. Wipe my feet! Huh! Nice life, ain't it? Wiping your feet all day long! I suppose you think it's good enough for me. [MISS HATTIE *works quietly.*] Well, I looked at that automobile and I thought right away here was my chance to show the boss I could run one. He got a delivery truck a week or so ago, you know, and he won't so much as answer me when I ask for the job of running it. He's down on me. I'm going to quit. I want to be a chauffeur. That's nice work. People take their chauffeurs off on trips. The McFilsons took their man all through the White Mountains and down to Atlantic City.

MISS HATTIE. You haven't made a very good beginning.

WASH. Oh, I haven't, haven't I? Rub that in! I tell you that car was defective. I got it going all right, but there was something wrong with the steering gear. That's just my luck. Folks won't reason about it. My own aunt don't. And now this paper, the Catskill daily paper, that had ought to stand up for the people of the place, comes out and says things like this: says I ought to be severely punished; says I ought to be made to pay for the repairs. How am I going to pay for anything—and me a grocery clerk, wiping my feet all day long?

MISS HATTIE. Wash, there's one thing I think you ought to understand. [*She stops her work and speaks slowly.*] This house is mortgaged for twenty-one hundred dollars and the mortgage is due the first of next July. It'll be sold then, and they tell me it won't bring any more than the amount of the mortgage. That means that you and I have a home for about eight months longer. I don't know just what's going to happen then.

WASH. Who's got the mortgage?

MISS HATTIE. The bank.

WASH. Well, that's a nice business! Nice business for bankers to get into, taking homes away from poor people! What did you mortgage it for?

MISS HATTIE. To give you a home a little longer, Wash. I couldn't take care of you any other way. I've kept hoping you would get a job—

WASH. That's right! Throw it all on me! Huh!

MISS HATTIE. I've been trying all the afternoon not to look out of the window. They're going to take Lannie Frear out to the Poor House today. I don't want to see her go by.

WASH. Old Miss Frear? Oh, well! She's pretty old, ain't she? It's a good place for her.

MISS HATTIE. Lannie's just my age. We used to play together and go to parties. She was a pretty girl and she had lots of beaux, but she never got married, some way.

WASH. Women had ought to get married; then they'd have someone to keep 'em out of the Poor House.

MISS HATTIE. Who are you going to keep out of the Poor House, Wash?

WASH. Huh? Well, I must say this is a nice way for you to talk to me! Nice, cheerful place this is for a man that's been most killed. I've got a broken arm, I want you to know. I—

MISS HATTIE [*slowly*]. I don't suppose you can help it, Wash: *you're weak;* I'm weak; your mother was, and our mother. It's in the blood. We haven't got the stuff that stands up in the world and fights. We can't seem to stand up to things.

WASH. That's a nice way to talk about your relatives! Dead people, too. I don't see what's the matter with you today. You're queer. How about my grandfather? He was a pretty big man, wasn't he? You don't call him weak, do you?

MISS HATTIE. He was the weakest one of us all. He had to have his own way about everything.

WASH. Well, I'm not going to stand any more of this. You're driving me out of the house. I can't stand it. I'm going out and see if there ain't somebody that's got a little more heart than you have. [*He rises stiffly and takes his hat from a nail by the door.* MISS HATTIE *watches him go out and then returns to the range, which she polishes smartly. There is a rap at the door and then* MRS. JOHN TOMPKINS *enters.* MRS. TOMPKINS *has an old-fashioned golf cape thrown about her shoulders and she carries a little basket which she sets on the table.* MISS HATTIE *remains on her knees by the range.*]

MRS. TOMPKINS. Good afternoon, Miss Hattie! And how are you today? My, how bright and cheerful you are in here!

MISS HATTIE. So she's gone, has she?

MRS. TOMPKINS. Gone?

MISS HATTIE. I knew some of the neighbors would be in here trying to cheer me up as soon as she got started—not but what it's good of you—I don't forget that. [*She rises and takes off the gloves, hanging them carefully on the nail behind the range.*]

MRS. TOMPKINS. I've brought you—

MISS HATTIE. I've been trying all the afternoon not to look out of the window. I didn't want to see her go by. It makes me sick.

MRS. TOMPKINS. It is hard—but it's so much better for her—as long as she's got to go. I've brought you—

MISS HATTIE. Yes, that's it, ain't it? "As long as she's got to go."

MRS. TOMPKINS [*firmly changing the subject*]. I've brought you a few fresh eggs, Miss Hattie. Our hens are doing better than some folks's.

MISS HATTIE. That's real kind of you, Mrs. Tompkins. [*They are both a little uncomfortable and they turn with relief as another rap is heard at the door.* MISS HATTIE *opens the door and* LYSANDER WILLIAMS *enters with a generous basket of vegetables.*]

MR. WILLIAMS. How-de-do, Miss Hattie! My wife sent

me over here with this collection of vegetables. She seemed to think maybe you'd like them.

MISS HATTIE. Thank you very much, Mr. Williams. [*She takes the basket and puts it under the table.* MR. WILLIAMS *and* MRS. TOMPKINS *exchange glances behind her back. They are both embarrassed when she turns rather quickly. They look away guiltily.*]

MR. WILLIAMS. You're pretty tight and comfortable here, aren't you, Miss Hattie?

MISS HATTIE. Yes, I won't have to go this winter. [MR. WILLIAMS *and* MRS. TOMPKINS *make deprecating gestures.*]

MRS. TOMPKINS. It's really very nice out there—you'd be surprised; I went there once—

MISS HATTIE. Visiting, I suppose?

MRS. TOMPKINS. Oh, yes, yes, of course.

MISS HATTIE. Of course.

MRS. TOMPKINS. But I was really impressed—it was so beautifully clean—

MISS HATTIE. Lannie Frear will love that. [*They all laugh and so are a little more at ease.*]

MRS. TOMPKINS. Poor Lannie did get dreadfully slack.—Such a looking place as she left! Oh, she's so much better off.—They will take very good care of her.

MR. WILLIAMS. The place is very well conducted. Mr. Temple is the right man in the right place, and his wife is a very good woman, a very good woman indeed, very kind—

MISS HATTIE. Oh, yes! They're kind and it's clean and there's enough to eat and no bills coming in—but it's the Poor House, ain't it? If it's so pleasant and nice, why don't folks say Poor House right out instead of wiggling all around it and saying "out to Cairo" or "a case for Mr. Temple" and all like that, sparing people's feelings while they tell 'em how nice it is? [*She stands back, facing her visitors, and she speaks slowly with a good deal of passion.*] Oh, you needn't to stand there trying not to look at me while you tell me how nice it is "out to Cairo." I'm one of them that hasn't got to go, thank God! I've got four hundred and twenty-seven dollars laid

away. Four hundred and twenty-seven dollars that I've scrimped and screwed and pinched and saved. My, it looks good to me when I take it out and feel of it! Three hundred will put me in the Old Ladies' Home down in the village and they say I can have the interest on the rest as long as I live. I'm safe. That's why I couldn't look out of the window and see Lannie Frear being taken "out to Cairo"—it made me feel so! Oh, I can't tell you how it made me feel. If I'd a thought I'd have to go "out to Cairo" next July when they take up the mortgage—why, I'd have gone over and said good-bye to her! I could have done it.

MRS. TOMPKINS. Oh, Miss Hattie, I'm so glad!

MR. WILLIAMS. Yes, indeed, Miss Hattie. I wish I'd known about this before. My wife has been worrying about you. She couldn't sleep last night.

MISS HATTIE. Because it's so nice out there? Oh, I don't mean to be rude. I know how kind you are. But it does make such a lot of difference if you have a little money, now, don't it? If Lannie Frear had had three hundred dollars—some folks spend as much as that on a dress or a coat.—Money makes an awful lot of difference.

MRS. TOMPKINS. But it hadn't ought to!

MR. WILLIAMS. What are you going to do as long as everything has a price?

MRS. TOMPKINS. There ought to be some things that can't be bought and sold.

MISS HATTIE. They aren't the things that keep you alive. You've got to pay to stay alive, unless you go like Lannie Frear.

MR. WILLIAMS. And when you die, someone has got to pay your funeral expenses.

MRS. TOMPKINS. But there's religion—and love—and things like that.

MISS HATTIE. Religion's kind of expensive, I think. If you've really got it, you want to give and give until you'd be Poor House poor in no time if you didn't kind of pull up and forget about it once in a while. The last time I went to

church I heard a man preach about Foreign Missions and didn't I go and give sixty cents I'd saved for my Old Ladies' Home box. I haven't been to church since. I can't afford to. When I get in the Old Ladies' Home I'm going to be real religious. I'll feel as if I can.

MRS. TOMPKINS. Well, I suppose it does cost something to belong to a church—but love, now; love ought to be without price.

MISS HATTIE. I don't know. Love has kind of passed me by, someway. Lannie Frear, now, she had lots of lovers, but nobody ever asked me to marry them. I don't see as being married helped my mother much. She liked my father;—I used to wonder about that sometimes, for he wasn't a very agreeable man. He never let her say her soul was her own, and my sister and I were always kind of afraid of him. Then there was my sister, Wash's mother, you know; she had love—and she died out in that front room and left me Wash to take care of. Oh, I don't know about love. It's kind of queer. Husbands and wives don't always turn out like you think they're going to, and children are kind of disappointing sometimes.—And lots of children are lonesome too;—their fathers and mothers don't always understand. I guess you pay for love all right. Money makes a lot of difference there, too. You might 'a' thought Wash'd be some comfort to me, mightn't you?

MRS. TOMPKINS. I am very sorry to hear this about Wash.

MR. WILLIAMS. Whatever possessed him, Miss Hattie?

MRS. TOMPKINS. I passed him as I was coming in here, but he wouldn't speak to me. What does he say about it?

MISS HATTIE. He says he thought he could run the car.—He can't seem to see that he didn't have any right to. [*There is a sound of stumbling and fumbling at the door, which opens with a burst, and* WASH *enters, livid with fear, in a panic, trembling. He ignores the visitors, and addresses his aunt.*]

WASH. What do you think?—It's awful, I tell you! They're going to have me arrested! [*He staggers to the rocking chair and sinks into it.*] I never heard such talk. Mr.

Coats says he can send me to the Reformatory—to Elmira; and he'll do it if I don't pay for the damages to the automobile. It's awful! *Me!* The Reformatory!

MR. WILLIAMS. I'm not sure that it wouldn't be the best thing that could happen to you. Maybe they could make a man of you up there.

WASH. Huh! You think you're smart, don't you? Because you can make money selling rotten vegetables!

MRS. TOMPKINS. You smashed the car, didn't you? Who did you think was going to pay for it?

MISS HATTIE. How much is it?

WASH. Three hundred dollars. That's what they say at the garage. They're cheating, of course. It won't cost anything like as much as that. They don't know how to be honest. So they're going to send me to the Reformatory—because I haven't got three hundred dollars, because I'm poor. That's it. *The Reformatory!* ME! Think of that!

MISS HATTIE. Three hundred dollars.

MR. WILLIAMS. Now, Miss Hattie, you aren't going to—

MRS. TOMPKINS. Oh, no, Miss Hattie!

WASH. What's that?

MR. WILLIAMS. You have no right to—

MRS. TOMPKINS. It would be dreadfully wrong!

MR. WILLIAMS. The boy ought to take his lesson.

MRS. TOMPKINS. Please don't think of it, Miss Hattie!

WASH. What are you talking about?

MISS HATTIE. I don't know—maybe I've got to. Maybe I can't help it.

MR. WILLIAMS. That's nonsense!

MRS. TOMPKINS. Of course you can help it.

MISS HATTIE. Some folks could, but I guess I ain't that kind. I'm weak—I know it. It ain't because I think I ought to—though I don't know about that. Our family has all been like that. We've either got to have our own way about everything or we've got to make everybody give in to someone else that has. My mother made us give in until it seems as if I couldn't do anything else. I haven't ever had my way.

WASH. Have you got three hundred dollars? And you didn't tell me about it—your own nephew that they're trying to send to the Reformatory—

MR. WILLIAMS. I'd like to have the privilege of thrashing you, just once, young man!

MRS. TOMPKINS. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Wash Wykoff!

WASH. Huh! I suppose you'd like to go to the Reformatory!

MISS HATTIE. If I don't do it I'll think about it all the time. I'll think about it in the night. I couldn't be comfortable anywhere. So you see it's kind of getting my own way, ain't it? It's no wonder Wash don't amount to much. I guess we're the kind of folks that keeps the Poor House going.

WASH. Huh!

MISS HATTIE. Maybe if I'd brought him up different—if I'd been stricter with him—made him work—it would have been better. I didn't seem to know how—I just kept hoping.—Maybe I didn't try hard enough.

MRS. TOMPKINS. You have given him everything you had!

MISS HATTIE. Yes, that's just it. That's what I mean. I think it's cruel sometimes to give so much. It's easier than fighting. You see my trouble was that I would have had to fight myself as well as Wash and I couldn't seem to do it.

MR. WILLIAMS. But you aren't going to—

WASH. You quit your meddling!

MISS HATTIE. Be still, Wash! [*She goes into the next room and returns with the money in her hand.* WASH *seizes the roll of bills and begins to count them.*] There's three hundred dollars. [*She turns to* MR. WILLIAMS.] Will you please ask the bank people to try to sell this house as soon as they can? I don't want to wait. There's no use waiting.

MRS. TOMPKINS. Maybe it will bring a little more than the mortgage.

MISS HATTIE. Maybe.

WASH. Gee! I hate to give all this good money to old Coats!

MR. WILLIAMS. If you don't get out of here, I'll kick you out!

WASH. Huh! You will, will you? You better hurt yourself! [WASH *goes out.*]

MR. WILLIAMS. Miss Hattie, will you give me the rest of your money? He'll get that out of you if he can.

MISS HATTIE. I thought of that. [*She takes the rest of her money from the front of her dress.*] There's one hundred and twenty-seven dollars.

MR. WILLIAMS. If Wash asks you if you have any more, tell him no.

MISS HATTIE. That would be a lie, wouldn't it?

MRS. TOMPKINS. }
MR. WILLIAMS. } No!

MRS. TOMPKINS. Well, I must be going. How short the days are getting! It's almost dark. I'm so sorry, Miss Hattie—and you know if there's anything I can do for you—

MISS HATTIE. You're very kind.

MR. WILLIAMS. I'm very sorry about this, Miss Hattie, but I'll do what I can for you.

MISS HATTIE. You're very kind. Good-bye. Good-bye.

MRS. TOMPKINS. Good night, Miss Hattie. [MRS. TOMPKINS *and* MR. WILLIAMS *go out.* MISS HATTIE *watches them go, then looks around the room and goes to the window.*]

MISS HATTIE. Lannie Frear must be out there by this time.

[CURTAIN.]

BOOKS AND ARTICLES HELPFUL IN THE STUDY OF "THE POOR HOUSE"

* Alice Brown: *Joint Owners in Spain.* Chicago, 1914.

Louise Driscoll: "The Child of God," *Seven Arts,* Vol. I, pp. 34-36. New York, 1916.

* *Garden Grace.* New York, 1924.

* *The Garden of the West.* New York, 1922.

* John Emerson and Anita Loos: *How to Write Photo Plays.* Philadelphia [1923].

* R. I. Gannon: *The Technique of the One-Act Play.* New York [1925].

* Lady Gregory: *Seven Short Plays.* New York, 1903.

* H. N. Hillebrand: *Writing the One-Act Play.* New York [1925].

* V. T. Patterson: *Cinema Craftsmanship.* New York [1921].

* For high school reference.

THE SIEGE [1]

By

COLIN CAMPBELL CLEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

THE SIEGE

No one author in this collection has written so many one-act plays as Colin Campbell Clements; nevertheless, he is still a young man, having been born on February 25, 1894, in Omaha, Nebraska. Most of his life has been spent in the West. Here, in his own words, is an account of his education:

When a boy he was taken to Denver and from there to Montana, where, with the aid of a tutor, a school, and a pony, he managed to "grow up."

In 1913 he entered the University of Montana, because "there were mountains out there." Here he was allowed by overly fond professors to take all the junior and senior courses in English, which—ugh—left nothing but science and math. for his senior year. During the summer months he was respectfully: a carpenter, a bricklayer, and a plumber.

In 1915 he entered the University of Washington, because "there was a sea out there." Here he came under the direction of Professor Herbert H. Gowen, the oriental scholar (he has just gone to the Orient on the invitation of the Japanese government to deliver a series of lectures), and Professor Joel Johansen, a young dramatic critic and professor, who had just returned from Oxford. The days at Washington were strenuous, for CCC ran two magazines and a newspaper, adapted a series of plays from the Japanese, and wrote a hundred or so others for Samuel French. CCC went in strong for drama: he acted, directed, got a half a dozen new courses started, and God knows how many different kinds of dramatic clubs, until

the head of the English department in despair cried, "Clem, you can't do *everything!*" His senior examinations were written (for he had been greatly influenced by E. Gordon Craig) as dramatic dialogue and were called, by Johansen, the most unique examinations ever handed in for a degree. He got the degree!

Clements's further formal education, if the idea of formality can in any wise be associated with this young playwright, included work at the Carnegie Institute of Technology in 1918, and study under Professor George Pierce Baker at Harvard in 1922-1923.

In 1923, Clements received the Near East Relief Medal. This award was for his services in Turkey and Syria in 1919-1920. In view of the title and the subject matter in the play by which he is represented in this volume, it is interesting to know that he was in Urfa, Mesopotamia, for the duration of a sixty-day siege. The management of Soup Kitchens in Syria and relief work in Cilicia complete the saga of Clements's experience in the Near East. Roumania, too, has known his energetic intervention. There was relief work also in Roumania and in addition activities connected with the Roumanian National Theatre, for which Clements dramatized *Rip Van Winkle,* and prepared, with Ion Paretz (formerly the Director), a stage version of Queen Marie's *Ilderim.*

Clements is a man of the Little Theatre. He has had professional experience as director, actor, and play-reader, with the Portmanteau Players of Stuart Walker, with the Gloucester Players in Massachusetts, and with the Lobero Players in Santa Barbara, California. He has also been associated with the Provincetown group. He is interested historically also in the Little Theatre movement, for did he not, in 1918, write *In Defense of the Little Theatre,* an essay in which he traces the an-

cestry of the Little Theatre back to those guild companies and dramatic confraternities that were leading a lively existence in the late Middle Ages and the early Renaissance?

Although the writings of Clements have been almost exclusively for the stage, he has produced one work of an entirely different nature, an anthology revealing his interest in religion: *A Book of Prayers for Boys,* which may be said to be the fruit of a year spent at the Lawrenceville School as English master.

As might be expected, Colin Campbell Clements has ranged widely in his experiments. His one-act plays fall into five more or less distinct categories. He has worked successfully at the time-honored occupation of the playwright, adaptation. In this rôle he has produced versions of the *Book of Job,* of *Gammer Gurton's Needle,* of various Japanese Noh plays, and of a mediæval French farce called *Love in a French Kitchen,* which belongs to the same vintage as *Maître Patelin.* He has, in his presentation of Japanese drama to English-speaking audiences, produced some creditable lines—ringing heroic couplets and smooth blank verse. An examination of the text of *Life Is a Dream* or of *The Cherry Blossom Lover* will bear this statement out.

Belonging, I fancy, to the earliest period of his productivity are brief plays such as *Pirates* and *Just Women,* projections of dull social intercourse in a small English town in the early Victorian period. In them, satire rather overshoots the mark, and, indeed, the target is hardly worth the shaft.

Through association with the Provincetown group, Clements's style and his outlook on life seem to have been modified. In *Wreckage,* written in collaboration with Mary Heaton Vorse, a theme is treated which shows

a certain similarity to that of Eugene O'Neill's *Diff'rent*. *Moon Tide* is a study of the darks and depths of seacoast character of a variety not unknown at the Wharf Theatre. *Spring,* with its characters distinguished as The Gob, The Skirt, and The Cop, presents a casual encounter on a moonlight night in spring in a public park, in the spirit—and here a great compliment is intended—of the author of *Anna Christie.*

The characters of the harlequinade hold no terror for Clements. He does not see them as ghosts of an outworn theatrical tradition, but as breathing, blushing personalities. Sometimes he succeeds in transferring his sense of the vitality of the "comedy of masks" to his readers and audience. In this respect, he has succeeded notably in *Harlequin,* an allegory of the clarification of love; in *Pierrot in Paris,* a minute sophistry of the boulevards, and in *Columbine,* a one-act play concerning an O. Henry type of working girl who bears the name of Columbine when she might just as well have been Mary Smith. The moralities entitled *The Ivory Tower* and *All on a Summer's Day* suggest, without naming them, the old Italian stock characters. Neither of these latter plays is touched with reality.

The Siege belongs to the fifth class of Clements's miniature dramas, to the plays that are the fruit of his experience in the Orient and in the Balkans. The life of the bazaars is veraciously reproduced in *The Haiduc;* the waysides of the East in *The Three Lepers of Suk-El-Garab.* The elements of Roumanian folklore and the suggestion of a background of gypsy dance, music, and movement are particularly enriching in *The Haiduc.* The New Testament has furnished Clements with two dramatic ideas. In *The Desert* he imagines a sequel for the life of Mary, the mother of Jesus; in *The Four Who*

Were Blind he repeats, against a modern setting in Palestine, the pattern of the miracle of the wedding feast at Cana.

It is noteworthy that Colin Clements's interest in the drama has, as we have seen, not been confined to the writing of plays. Acting and directing also have engaged his abundant energies. On the subject of acting, he cherishes definite theories, summed up, for the most part, in the following statement: "When the actor of today has finally learned, through rhythm, to make his body the perfect instrument of his imagination, and when that imagination in turn is so directed that it becomes one with the imagination of the playwright, the actor's body becomes the willing instrument of the play he is interpreting."

The element of surprise has never been lacking in the progression of events in Clements's life—surprise and as much suspense as the most captious student of drama could demand. Where will the next step lead?

The Siege: an oriental room. The chief interest in this setting is furnished by the way the spaces are patterned and by the silhouettes of mosque and minaret seen against the horizon.

THE SIEGE

CHARACTERS

ZANAB.
BISHARA, *her old nurse.*
GAZNIA, *a servant.*

A room in an Oriental house. At the right is an arched door leading to another part of the house; a door at the left, partly hidden by a large Oriental screen of carved wood and inlaid pearl, opens into a bedroom. At the back, up one step, is a balcony with a latticed window overlooking the city. A small round table with a copper water-jar stands near the screen. The only other piece of furniture is a low couch, over which a rug is thrown, near the center of the room.

When the curtains part, the room, grey and sombre, is empty. The old servant enters from the right. She arranges the pillows on the couch and sees that the water-jar is full. As she moves quietly about the room she glances now and then at the closed windows, each time with a little exclamation of fear. Once she starts as if to open the shutters, moves as far as the step, stops for a moment, and then with a little sob hurries from the room. There is quietness. The wail of a street dog is heard, then quietness again. ZANAB *enters from the bedroom. She stands, slowly turning from left to right.* BISHARA *enters.*

ZANAB. I thought—I thought I heard you here.

BISHARA. No. . . . I have not been here. Perhaps it was Old Gaznia filling the water-jar you heard.

ZANAB. Yes . . . perhaps it was Old Gaznia. But she has not opened the shutters.

BISHARA. I shall open them.

ZANAB. Yes . . . yes. [BISHARA *goes to the windows.* ZANAB *turns quickly.*] No . . . no, no!

BISHARA [*comes to* ZANAB]. Why are you up with the dawn?

ZANAB. You, also, are here.

BISHARA. I came because I heard you.

ZANAB. I was very quiet.

BISHARA. You did not sleep, Pretty One?

ZANAB. Sleep! All night I listened . . . for sixty days and sixty long nights I have been listening. No . . . no, I have not slept!

BISHARA. But the prisoners have gone now. Last night at midnight they went away.

ZANAB [*speaking slowly*]. Last night at midnight . . . so quietly, so quietly. I stood at my window. There was only a flash, and then I heard the carts as they moved away in the darkness. I heard the rumble of wooden wheels over the stones in the darkness. They moved away to the little white road that wanders through the mountains. Once a dog barked, then all was quiet again. [*She sighs.*] They are gone. Those people who came to bring peace to us who have never known peace, who came to bring civilization to us who have never known civilization . . . they have gone away. They have been driven away! Oh, Bishara, must we always, always, always be caged things? I am afraid! [*She puts out her hand to meet* BISHARA'S.] I—am—afraid.

BISHARA. It is over now. The siege has been lifted and the prisoners have been allowed to go away in safety.

ZANAB. The siege! For sixty days without food . . . without water, and still they fought! They were surrounded . . . they were like rats in a trap. And still they fought! Always I prayed Allah to send them help. Always I sat at that window—

BISHARA. I know. . . . I know.

ZANAB. Waiting . . . waiting for help. [*She turns her head away.*] Waiting for help that never came. Bishara, I am afraid for them.

BISHARA. Saeed promised them safety to the border of his land—he will keep his word.

ZANAB. Can he keep his word? [BISHARA *moves away.*] Saeed is a coward. *Can* he keep his word? Can any coward keep his word?

BISHARA. Saeed is your betrothed.

ZANAB. I am his prisoner. [*A low chant is heard from the city.* ZANAB *starts.*] What . . . what is that?

BISHARA. It is . . . it is the muezzin calling the morning prayer.

ZANAB. But the sun cannot be up yet. It is not time for the morning prayer. Open the windows! [BISHARA *starts toward the balcony.*] No, no . . . let them be shut. I am afraid! Bishara, I am afraid . . . for him! No, do not open the windows.

BISHARA. But it is daylight.

ZANAB. They went through the mountains . . . the mountains are treacherous.

BISHARA. Ah, they have surely reached the plains beyond the mountains. It is daylight. [*The chant is heard again.*]

ZANAB. Hear . . . what is that?

BISHARA [*listens*]. Yes, it is daylight. The muezzin is calling the morning prayer . . . calling his people to prayer.

ZANAB. His call is dismal.

BISHARA. Calling his people to prayer.

ZANAB. To prayer! To pray one must first love. What do the muezzin's people know of love? [*She turns.*] Oh, they could have learned, but they have driven love away. They could have learned. They could have learned! [*She covers her face.*] My love! My love! My love! They have driven love away . . . André—André—André. [*She runs to the window and with her head against the closed shutters sobs.*] André . . . they have driven you away. The little white road has carried you away through the mountains and beyond—be-

yond. I heard the wooden carts as they moved away in the darkness, André. You went with them! But I shall be here waiting for you always . . . always. André, your Zanab . . . your little Zanab will wait for you—always. She will watch the little white road for your return. You promised you would come back! André . . . André.

BISHARA. Sh-h-h! He'll kill us. Saeed will hear you. He has spies everywhere. He will kill us!

ZANAB. Kill . . . kill us? Who is afraid of death, here?

BISHARA [*takes* ZANAB *by the arm and leads her to the couch*]. No . . . no. Oh, they have reached the plains beyond the mountains and André and his brave men are on the wide road now, the wide road that leads to their own country.

ZANAB. On the wide road . . . yes. André must be on the wide road that leads to his own country! I shall not be afraid any more. His own country . . . Do you remember, Bishara, do you remember how he used to tell us about his country? [BISHARA *slips to the floor beside the couch and listens.*] You remember he told us about those great green trees . . . those great green poplar trees that reach to the stars? To the stars, he said . . . and underneath were wide green places full of flowers and butterflies and laughter. He smiled so when he told us. . . . I shan't forget how he smiled. And do you remember the day he told us about the boats . . . little boats with blue and yellow sails . . . and he made a paper boat for us? Do you remember? And Gaznia put it sailing in a silver bowl? I should like to have ridden in a boat, over the water . . . so . . . and so . . . and so— And he told us of the fisher-folk who go down to the sea, the fisher-folk who always sing. [*She sings a snatch of a French song.*] And, Bishara, do you remember when he told us the story of— Ah, yes, yes, I know you do remember, for there is laughter in your eyes. And the young girls, the pretty young girls, who wear white headdresses. Oh, they must be lovely, those pretty young girls! He said . . . he said I could have a headdress too and—

BISHARA [*comes to* ZANAB *and takes her hand*]. Little Sweet—

ZANAB. Lovely girls . . . and they never lived, like us, behind barred windows or went about with their faces always covered . . . and they danced hand-in-hand through the gold of sunset, like white butterflies. Do you remember when André told us—

BISHARA. Sh-h-h.

ZANAB. But—

BISHARA. Saeed will kill us!

ZANAB. Perhaps . . . perhaps, but I shall tell him—

BISHARA [*draws away*]. No, no . . . no! Promise me you will not do that . . . promise me, promise me you won't do that! [*Weeping, she sinks to her knees at* ZANAB's *feet.*] Promise me you will not tell Saeed!

ZANAB. I—shall—not—tell—him.

BISHARA. Oh!

ZANAB. You and I shall have that secret always . . . forever. You and I. Just we two. Alone, we shall talk of the poplar trees that reach to the stars and the little boats with blue and—

BISHARA. You must forget. It is best to forget.

ZANAB [*rises*]. Forget . . . forget? It is impossible to forget one's—heart. No, I can never forget. . . . I shall always remember.

BISHARA. He has gone back to his own country.

ZANAB [*talks very slowly*]. To his own country. . . . Ah. To his own country. Yes, he was different from this . . . all this. So happy, so gay . . . so kind. Yes, he was quite different. Bishara, do you remember how you used to go out and bring him to me? [*She laughs softly.*] Do you remember? He was so funny in that long black cloak—so funny!

BISHARA [*covers her mouth with her hand*]. Sh-h-h. You must forget. André was of another life. He was of another chapter, and the page has been turned over. We go on to new stories. You must forget, even as he has forgotten.

ZANAB. Forgotten? Do you believe he will forget? Do you believe he has already forgotten me? Yes . . . yes, perhaps a man always forgets—because he is a man. Oh, but a woman, a woman never forgets, eh, Bishara? A woman never forgets. Surely he can't forget everything! Do you remember the night during Ramadan when you brought him through—that door? And he threw off his cloak like this . . . and stood before me like some strange god from the skies . . . like some strange god from an old story book? Bishara, his hair was like spun gold! He was like—

BISHARA. Sh-h-h! Someone may hear you! Allah!

ZANAB. And Gaznia brought us sweetmeats from the bazaars and played for us on the pipes—and I danced? Oh . . . the jasmine was in bloom then. I think it will never, never be so sweet again as it was that night . . . never so sweet again. And the stars were very bright. They hung from the skies like silver lamps. I think the stars will never come so close to earth again. [*Softly.*] Bishara . . . life was sweet then.

BISHARA. Little Bird . . . Little Bird, he has gone away. You must forget. He has gone away. He will forget. It is best to forget. Life is like that . . . it is best to forget.

ZANAB. But I shall never forget. Why do you talk to me so? I can never forget . . . all through the nights I shall dream of him, as I saw him last, here before me . . . all through the nights I shall dream of him and all through the days I shall think of him—André. What is, *is*—we cannot change it, Bishara. [*She throws out her arms.*] In my dreams I shall be with him there in his own country—with him, under the trees and the stars, with him, in the little blue boats upon the water, with him— [*The door at the back opens.* GAZNIA *enters. She is carrying a large silver tray.*]

BISHARA. Sh-h-h! Sh-h-h! [ZANAB *sits down again.* GAZNIA *places the tray upon a small table near the couch and brings the water-jar and a silver bowl from the screen. She pours fresh water over* ZANAB'S *hands.*]

ZANAB. You look very tired, Gaznia.

GAZNIA. Little Sister of the Moon . . . I—I am very tired.

ZANAB. You have not slept well?

GAZNIA [*glances around the room with frightened eyes*]. I—I did not sleep.

ZANAB [*laughs*]. You are in love?

BISHARA. Sh-h-h!

ZANAB. You are in love, Gaznia?

GAZNIA [*softly*]. Your love was my love; your happiness, my happiness. I was in love with love.

BISHARA [*turns and whispers*]. We shall all be killed!

ZANAB. In love with love? In—love—with—love. Gaznia, let in the sunlight. Open the windows wide. We shall need the sunshine today. [GAZNIA *moves toward the windows.* ZANAB *begins to drink the coffee which has been placed before her. She is about to put down the cup when* BISHARA *moves toward her.*]

BISHARA. Little One—

ZANAB. The coffee is so black.

BISHARA. My Lovely One, let me put the water of roses in your cup. [*She pours from a small silver pitcher.* ZANAB *tastes the coffee.*]

ZANAB. It is so sweet . . . too sweet. [GAZNIA *reaches out her hand to swing open the windows, but, in fear, draws back her hand.*]

GAZNIA. Oh-h-h.

ZANAB [*not seeing* GAZNIA'S *fear*]. Let in the sunlight . . . swing open the windows, Gaznia. [*She gives* BISHARA *the cup.*] Put it down. I cannot drink this morning, I cannot drink. No, I shall watch the sun make patterns through the lattice. I shall watch the sun chase the little frightened shadows across the marble floor. Open the windows, Gaznia. [GAZNIA *swings open the windows. Terrified, she stands looking down into the streets, then begins to weep.*]

BISHARA [*runs to the windows*]. What is it, Gaznia? [*She looks out.*] What is it? There is . . . there is . . . there is no one in the streets!

ZANAB. There is no one in the streets? What does it mean? What does it mean?

GAZNIA. Hear me . . . the muezzin this morning, the muezzin, even before dawn, called out for all good Mohammedans to go out . . . to go out upon the white road . . . out into the mountains and overtake the freed prisoners. There is no one in the streets. [*She covers her face with her hands.*] There is no one in the streets! They have all gone! They have all gone out into the mountains. [*She flees from the room.*]

ZANAB. The muezzin . . . this morning . . . before dawn . . . called— You told me it was the call to prayer! You lied!

BISHARA [*who has sunk to the floor*]. I did not know! I did not know!

ZANAB. They have gone out to overtake the soldiers . . . to kill them! They have gone out to kill the Christians! They have gone to the mountains! The muezzin has called them. Saeed has broken his word . . . he has lied! Saeed always lies! He is a coward . . . a coward . . . he lied! Bishara, do you hear, the muezzin has called them . . . they have gone . . . the streets are empty! Saeed has broken his word. Every man has gone out to . . . gone out into the mountains to—kill. Bishara, do you hear . . . to kill!

BISHARA. The prisoners were given permission to go in honor . . . they have their guns and their ammunition with them. They will again fight.

ZANAB. The muezzin has called . . . perhaps . . . perhaps Saeed had men hidden in the mountains waiting . . . waiting, like thieves, like murderers, like— They will cut off the camels and the little wooden carts and then—

BISHARA. Ah—but surely they have reached the plains beyond the mountains. They surely have reached the plains . . . the plains—

ZANAB. A camel train moves slowly and the wooden carts—

BISHARA [*bravely*]. But surely . . . yes, yes, they have reached the plains beyond the mountains. They are safe. [*Firing and shouts from afar are heard.*]

ZANAB. What is that?

BISHARA [*raises her head and listens*]. I heard nothing. I hear nothing. [*The shouts are heard again. The two women stand looking at each other in silence. The shouts are heard as though a great crowd of men were drawing nearer.* ZANAB *moves to the window and looks out.* BISHARA *crawls to the step of the balcony.*]

ZANAB. See! They are coming down the little white road. They are coming into the town . . . they are coming down the little white road . . . the little white road from the mountains. Men, men, men—walking, running, on horseback. It is like a great black river. It is like— See, they are like flies! Bishara, what is that? Look! They are leading . . . see they are leading camels! One—two—three—four—five— [*She shrieks.*] They have killed— No—no—no! [*She covers her mouth with her hand.*] They have—no—no—no. Look! The little wooden carts. Yes! Look! There are men on white horses . . . they are galloping ahead. They are—what is it? [*The shouts become louder.*] See . . . see, they have something on their spears. Flags? No! It must be flags. [*She leans out.*] Bishara, they are carrying back . . . heads! Heads upon their spears! Bishara! Bishara! Where are you . . . where have you gone? It is so dark. Bishara! [BISHARA *sobs aloud.* ZANAB *turns. Her eyes have become wild. She comes forward, groping her way as if she were walking in the dark.*]

ZANAB. They are bringing back the . . . Saeed lied! The muezzin has— [*She is silent for a moment.*] They have never reached the plains . . . they have been caught in the mountains! [*She stands swaying back and forth.*] André . . . André . . . André, for you and me there will never be any more green trees . . . no little blue boats upon the water—there will never be . . . André! André! [BISHARA *runs to her and tries to comfort her.* ZANAB *brushes her away.*] No! No! No! It is too late, now! [BISHARA *backs away and stands helplessly leaning against the wall.*] André, you will never come back alive! They have lied to you! My

people have lied to you. [*Her voice changes.*] No more little whisperings . . . we shall never dance again. No, André . . . we shall never dance again. [*She covers her face with her hands and begins to laugh softly.*] How dark it is! How—strange—it—all—is! Yes . . . yes . . . open the windows, André . . . let in the sunlight, André! Let in the sunlight . . . the sunlight . . . the sun— [ZANAB *sinks to the floor.* BISHARA *runs to her and with a shriek bends over* ZANAB'S *body as the curtains are drawn.*]

[CURTAIN.]

BOOKS AND ARTICLES HELPFUL IN THE STUDY OF "THE SIEGE"

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* *Curtain.* New York [1925].

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* *Sea Plays.* Boston [1925].

"Seven Plays of Old Japan," in *Poet Lore,* Vol. XXXI, pp. 159-196. Boston, 1920.

The Touchstone. New York [1923].

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[With M. H. Vorse]: *Wreckage.* New York, 1924.

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* Margaret Wright: "Colin Clements," *Poet Lore,* Vol. XXXII, pp. 576-578. Boston, 1921.

* For high school reference.

THE CHANGE-HOUSE [1]

By

JOHN BRANDANE

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INTRODUCTION

THE CHANGE-HOUSE

The Hebrides, barren islands off the northwest coast of Scotland, have cast a spell over several generations of literary men. Johnson and Boswell, journeying there together, left, each one of them, substantial records of his observations. "I had desired to visit the *Hebrides*, or Western Islands of Scotland, so long," writes Johnson, "that I scarcely remember how the wish was originally excited; and was in the Autumn of the year 1773 induced to undertake the journey, by finding in Mr. Boswell a companion, whose acuteness would help my inquiry, and whose gaiety of conversation and civility of manners are sufficient to counteract the inconvenience of travel, in countries less hospitable than we have passed." Wordsworth, the romantic, made telling use of the glamorous dactylic sound in his familiar description of the song of the Highland girl, reaping:

> A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard
> In spring-time from the cuckoo-bird,
> Breaking the silence of the seas
> Among the farthest Hebrides.

More recently Barrie chose the locality as the scene of the evanishing of Mary Rose. "Lovely, lovely, lovely," are the words Barrie puts into her mouth to evoke the magic of the island, in the outer Hebrides, that "likes to be visited." However, her lover and husband, Simon, a

literal person, seeing only the "outward shows," is made by Barrie to exclaim: "I once went on shore there . . . very bleak and barren, rocks and rough grass, I never saw a tree." Most recently John Brandane has laid the scene of his one-act play *The Change-House* at Eilean Aros in the inner Hebrides. The action of this play is placed in the year 1752, a generation before Johnson and Boswell made their famous pilgrimage.

A playwright could hope for no more romantic setting than the Hebrides, seven years after the Rising of the '45, the momentous year when the Young Pretender, Charles Edward, landed in Scotland with his friends to seek to regain the English throne for his dynasty. After defeating the English commander and his army at Preston Pans, Charles Edward crossed the border at the head of six thousand men. There was something like a panic in the England of that day, but the success of the Young Pretender was short-lived. At Culloden Moor the Highlanders were put to flight. After this battle, beset on all sides, he became a fugitive, wandering among the mountains.

John Brandane's plays are a notable addition to the brief history of drama in Scotland. The annals of the Scots theatre, too, are meagre. Within five years, however, an organization has developed which, in quality of accomplishment, actually rivals The Irish National Players of the Famous Abbey Theatre Company of Dublin. The Scottish National Theatre Society came into existence in 1921. It aims "to develop Scottish national drama, to encourage in Scotland a public taste for drama of any type, to found a Scottish National Theatre." The organization has a remarkable record of accomplishment. By March, 1926, these Scottish National Players had performed four hundred times in towns and

villages all over Scotland and had even penetrated as far south as Manchester. For the most part the Players are amateurs. They work, however, under a professional producer. They have given forty-four different plays, of which thirty-six were presented for the first time on any stage. The Scottish National Players are at home in Glasgow, where they hope eventually to occupy a theatre of their own. Besides John Brandane's plays, they have recognized native talent by staging *Campbell of Kilmhor* again—given first by the old Glasgow Repertory Theatre—Robert Bain's chronicle play, *James the First of Scotland,* called the most ambitious work that these Players have produced, George Blake's *The Mother,* and George Reston Mallock's *Soutarnass Water.*

At least one other of the successful productions of the Scottish National Players, J. A. Ferguson's admirable *Campbell of Kilmhor,* plays during this same crucial period of Scottish history. In Ferguson's drama the hero, Dugald Stewart, actually dies to save the knowledge of Charles Edward's hiding place from Campbell of Kilmhor, a representative of the Hanoverian government. The events in *The Change-House* occur, as has been pointed out, at a somewhat later period. The political situation is taken for granted, and the enmity between the Redcoats and the Highlanders is an accepted fact.

The Change-House was given for the first time in November, 1921. John Brandane then conceived the idea of expanding the tense situation of this one-act play and wrote two additional acts, altering the name from *The Change-House* to *The Lifting.* The first act of the new version is substantially the same as the original one-act play. Act II consists for the most part of comedy. Callum, whom Iain aimed to rescue from hanging for a murder which he had not committed, has escaped from

prison disguised as a British soldier. He is captivated by Seonaid, Flora MacLeod's companion, and courts her with simple fervor and touching urgency. There are charming pastoral touches in this act and an alternation of entrances and exits on the part of British soldiers and Highlanders suggestive of the method of a farce. In Act III the chief characters conspire to escape, but Iain is shot and dies in Flora's arms. Just before the catastrophe there is repeated, in substance, that passage of real splendor from the earlier play, the one in which Iain, exercising the Hebridean prerogative of second sight, foresees his own death.

IAIN. I'm seeing it—I'm seeing it.

FLORA. Is it the sight is on you, Iain?

IAIN. I dinna ken; but it was naught evil. 'Twas the old Shieling Keose, lass. Aye, we'll be going there when this dark day's but a memory that's faded. It will be moonlight there. And your face will be like the white moss, shining and shining in the night, my love, and your words lovelier than the wee burns tinkling in the dark.

It is amusing to compare this exalted poetry with Doctor Johnson's ponderous discussion of this particular Highland superstition.

We should [this conscientious tourist observed] have little claim to the praise of curiosity, if we had not endeavored with particular attention to examine the question of the *Second Sight*. Of an opinion received for centuries by a whole nation, and supposed to be confirmed through its whole descent by a series of successive facts, it is desirable that the truth should be established, or the fallacy detected.

The *Second Sight* is an impression made either by the mind upon the eye, or by the eye upon the mind, by which things distant or future are perceived, and seen as if they were

present. . . . Mr. Boswell's frankness and gaiety made everybody communicative, and we heard many tales of the airy shows with more or less evidence of distinctness.

Critics have, on the whole, preferred the one-act play, *The Change-House,* to the three-act version, *The Lifting.* The longer version has lost in passion what it has gained in complexity. The plot has suffered a corresponding loss of unity. The tragic outcome has been postponed but not particularly heightened. *The Lifting* had its first performance in Glasgow at the Athenæum on Tuesday, the third of February, 1925. For this occasion a suite in three movements, *Dule in Aros,* was composed by J. Seymour Halley, as incidental music for the play.

The Glen is Mine, published, in the American edition, with *The Lifting,* has been translated into French and Norwegian. It was given in the autumn of 1925 at the Norsk Teater in Oslo under the title, *Dalen Er Min.* It is a matter of interesting theatrical record that *The Change-House* was produced in March, 1912, at a special matinée in New York under the direction of the late Franklin H. Sargeant.

" John Brandane," it should be noted, is the pen name of Dr. John MacIntyre, a physician now resident in Glasgow. The natives of the Isle of Bute—Dr. MacIntyre was born at Rothesay—were once known as Brandanes, a circumstance which accounts for the name assumed by this eminent physician for purposes of literary disguise. At one time, Dr. MacIntyre had a practice in Mull, where he had ample opportunity to study the type of West Highland character which he has introduced into his novels and plays.

THE CHANGE-HOUSE

First produced by The Scottish National Players for the St. Andrew Society (Glasgow), at the Athenæum Theatre, Glasgow, on Tuesday, November 1, 1921, with the following cast:

DONNACHA	Donald Robertson.
ALASDAIR	J. Ronald Young.
IAIN DUBH	R. B. Wharrie.
FLORA	Queenie Russell.
SEONAID	Jean T. Smith.

The Play produced by ANDREW P. WILSON.

NOTES

OVERTURE.—"Prelude to 'The Change-House,'" by J. Seymour Halley.

BEFORE CURTAIN RISES.—"An Island Sheiling Song" (violin solo), from "Songs of the Hebrides," arranged by Kennedy Fraser.

PEATS.—May be used before, or on, rise of curtain to diffuse aroma of peat smoke through theatre for a short period.

COSTUMES.—No tartan or kilt should be worn, as the district of the play is under military occupation, and both were proscribed by Government at period of play.

FLORA AND SEONAID.—See pages 123 and 203 of MacIan's *Costumes of the Clans* for arisaids, etc.

IAIN DUBH, DONNACHA, AND ALASDAIR.—Lowland peasant dress of the period.

PRONUNCIATION

Amadan	A´matan
Dubh	Doo
Gualachaolish	Goolachool´ish
'Ille	Illy
Innis Fada	Innish Fa´ta
Keose	Kyose´
M'eudail	May´tal
Mo thruaighe	Moroo´ay
Mo chridhe	Mochree´
Oidche mhath	O´eechyva´
Seonaid	Shon´atj
Seoras	Sho´rass
Strathcoil	Strachool´
Tearlach Og	Cherrlach Oke´

Time: 1752.
Place: Eilean Aros (Inner Hebrides).
Scene: The Change-House at Croggan.

CHARACTERS

Donnacha MacLean, *landlord of the Change-House.*
Alasdair, *his gillie.*
Iain MacLean (Iain Dubh[1]), *master of the brig "Margaret."*
Flora MacLeod, *peasant girl from Innis Fada.*
Seonaid, *her second cousin.*
Two Crofters.

[1] Dark.

THE CHANGE-HOUSE

SCENE: *Interior of the Change-House at Croggan late on a September night in 1752. A large, mean, dimly lit room, half kitchen, half drinking chamber. The main door is in the center of back-wall; and one entering by this has a window in back-wall to right, and a cupboard against back-wall to left. Below window are a spade, some rakes, and a fishing-net; some oars are standing in adjoining corner. In wall to left is a rude hollow, serving for fire-place. Peats are aglow in this; and two lit cruisies hang from either end of the mantel-shelf. Nearer back, in same wall, is a door leading to back of house. In wall to right, about midway, is a door leading to the sleeping chambers. In the center of room are two tables and a bench. On the tables are drink-vessels—tappit-hens in pewter, some wood-ware, and such like. On either side the fire is a plain, rudely fashioned chair.*

The night is wild, and the coarse curtain over the window flaps occasionally as the squalls break over the building. The LANDLORD, *a big strong man of sixty, in peasant dress, is making a pretence of clearing tables and setting room in order. He is doing practically nothing, fidgeting and loafing by turns, his mind evidently pre-occupied by something else than the business in hand.*

ALASDAIR, *his gillie, a somewhat vacant-faced lad of eighteen, is, however, really working hard at same task; but, after a space, goes to window, and peers out.*

LANDLORD. Will you be leaving that window, and getting on wi' your work? [ALASDAIR *resumes clearing table, but is evidently both amused and perplexed at being ordered about by one who is idling.*]

ALASDAIR. It's well the people crossed before the storm began. The wind's rising. The Loch's white wi' scud.

LANDLORD [*bitterly*]. Aye! The Croggan folk were aye keen on a hanging. A night in the wet heather's nothing to them, if they'll can see a pretty man at the end o' a tow in the morning.

ALASDAIR. Poor Callum! What time will they do't, think you?

LANDLORD. About ten, I'm hearing. [ALASDAIR *is drawn to window again.*]

ALASDAIR. The moon—

LANDLORD. Will you get on wi' your work, *amadan!* [2]

ALASDAIR [*coming back from window*]. 'Save us, the moon's broke through! I can see the gibbet, now . . . plain on the hilltop it is!

LANDLORD. Wheesht you wi' your gibbets! My heart's sore enough for Callum already, without your harping on't. Get you to your work, *'ille.*[3]

ALASDAIR [*resuming tidying, but still amazed at the contrast between his own industry and the other's idleness*]. Rob More was saying he was on Maol Ban this evening, and he was seeing Iain Dubh's brig in the Lynn o' Lorne.

LANDLORD. Iain Dubh back! Are ye sure, lad?

ALASDAIR. Rob's no' likely to mistake. He was in her crew at one time.

LANDLORD. Iain Dubh back! And his own cousin to die a dule-tree death the morn at Gualachaolish! I had rather than fifty pund Iain didna land for a week to come!

ALASDAIR. He'll never can land if the storm gets worse.

LANDLORD. Will he no'? Ye dinna ken Iain, I'm thinking. [*Then horror-struck.*] My sorrow! What will be the end o' this! Iain back!

ALASDAIR [*at window again*]. The tide's high the night. We'll need to be pulling up the boats.

[2] Fool.
[3] Lad.

LANDLORD. Will you be keeping to your work? All the same I'd best be taking a look at the boats. It will indeed be the high tide this night wi' that wind. [*He goes out by back-door.* ALASDAIR *sets to dusting tables clumsily. A knock is heard at main door, and a Voice singing "The Sea-Reivers." Door opens and* IAIN MACLEAN (IAIN DUBH) *enters, still singing. He finishes his verse with a swaggering roll of his body, claps* ALASDAIR *on the shoulder, and shakes hands with him.* IAIN DUBH *is a man of thirty-five. He has a dark, flashing eye, and dark, curly hair. His manner is restrained in order to a concealment of a nature impulsive and candid. His dress is of rough, seafaring type.*]

IAIN. Well, Alasdair, there ye are, busy wi' the ale-stoups as usual. Be getting me some of the good stuff, *'ille.*

ALASDAIR [*going out at back door and returning with drinking-vessels*]. It's you after all, Captain. Rob More saw the brig from Maol Ban the day, but the master wasna for believing it could be you.

IAIN. And what for no'! It's four months since I left, and time I was home to this good ale, lad. Nothing like it in Holland, I'll assure you. *Slainte mhath!*[4] [*He drinks.*] And what now, will you tell me, are all the watch-fires doing across the Sound at Gualachaolish?

ALASDAIR. The people crossed tonight, fearing the storm would keep them from crossing in the morning.

IAIN. They'd good cause for their fears, I'm thinking. If the wind gets to the north 'twill be the big storm. But what's ado over there? A wedding at the marriage-tree at Killean?

ALASDAIR. A wedding! Have you no' heard? [*Goes to window.*] Aye . . . there's the moon now. Look!

IAIN. What is't, *'ille?*

ALASDAIR. Yon—on the hill.

IAIN. Mary Mother! A gibbet! What's afoot, lad? Who is't?

ALASDAIR. Callum o' Strathcoil.

[4] Good health!

IAIN. Callum?

ALASDAIR. Aye. Ye've been four months away. Ye wadna hear o't.

IAIN [*breathlessly*]. What was it?

ALASDAIR. He shot a sodger in Glenlussa, and the sodger died on them.

IAIN. God above! [*The* LANDLORD *enters.* IAIN *grasps his hand warmly.*] Is this true, Donnacha? Did the red-coat die after the ploy in the Glen? And is Callum to swing for't?

LANDLORD [*to* ALASDAIR]. Be getting Rob More to help you pull up the boats. [ALASDAIR *goes out. To* IAIN, *gravely.*] I see you have it, Iain. It's owre true.

IAIN. Donnacha, Donnacha! here is the black day! It was my hand fired yon shot.

LANDLORD [*gently*]. It's what I was aye thinking, Iain.

IAIN [*distractedly*]. Callum was wi' me in the wood; but he had no hand in it, I tell you! I but meant to wing the fellow for his insolence. My sorrow! I kent the man was ill, but he showed no sign o' dying when I sailed.

LANDLORD. He died a week after.

IAIN. Donnacha, Donnacha! Callum maunna die that gate. How many red-coats are there in the garrison?

LANDLORD. Sixty or thereby.

IAIN. That'll mean forty at the gibbet. We'll can do't! God! that it may rain in torrents the morn!

LANDLORD. For why?

IAIN. To soak their powder-horns well, *'ille!*

LANDLORD. You'll never be thinking of a lifting, Iain!

IAIN. What else, man! Aye, from the gibbet-foot itself, if need be.

LANDLORD. Iain, Iain, bethink you!

IAIN. I've twenty men on the brig; and the Croggan lads will surely no' be backward to help. We can count on fifty in all, I'm thinking. You've some arms here?

LANDLORD. You'll never do't. It's too desperate a stroke.

IAIN. Maybe. But it's Callum we're fighting for. We'll get them near the water's edge. I'll have the boats handy;

and we'll have him on the brig like the hawk, and it swooping, man!

LANDLORD. The hawk leaves blood on the heather at times, Iain.

IAIN. And what though? Anything rather than Callum dying the halter-death.

LANDLORD. And that's true. But—the brig—

IAIN. The brig's standing off and on for me all night.

LANDLORD. It's the rough sea. And if the wind goes full north—

IAIN. Man, you daunt me there! But we've the rough lads for the rough sea. We've seen Corrievrecken afore now. All the same, you're right, Donnacha. [*Biting his finger-nails.*] If it comes full north, she'll have to run for Kerrera and shelter there. And then where are we?

LANDLORD. We're by wi't then, I'm fearing.

IAIN. No, nor by wi't. We maun lippen on Croggan lads at that rate. Are there any here who havena crossed?

LANDLORD. Kenandroma and Portmore.

IAIN. I'll make sure o' them then, brig or no brig. [*He goes swiftly to the door.*] Be you looking to your arms, Donnacha. [*He goes out; and the* LANDLORD, *going to aumry, takes out some arms parcelled in cloths, and, unwrapping them, lays them on table. He is examining these when a knock comes to the door. He wraps up arms again hurriedly and replaces them.* FLORA *and* SEONAID MACLEOD *enter.* FLORA *is a fair-haired girl; her mien is gentle and drooping. The other—her second cousin—*SEONAID, *is a bright-eyed, dark-haired lass, with something of brusquerie, and more of confidence, in her bearing. Both are travel-stained and weary. They remove their plaids, and drop the portion of their arisaids which they are wearing as hoods, as they come in.*]

FLORA. A stormy night, goodman of the house. Is this the Inns?

LANDLORD. By your leave, my lass, not much of an Inns, only a poor kind of a change-house. We've little comfort for folk wanting to rest overnight. Is it far you'll have come?

FLORA. From Innis Fada.

LANDLORD. 'Shield us! What a journey! And would you not now be trying the Widow MacKinnon's? . . . the first house—

SEONAID. Goodman, is it Gael you are? We are ill with the great weariness. Can we no' be stopping here? [FLORA, *almost fainting, has sat down suddenly, her head in her hands.*]

LANDLORD [*regarding* FLORA]. Well, well! your will to you. It is indeed a long journey. My chamber is none of the best, look you. [*To* SEONAID.] Take you the cruisie, and I'll help this weary one. [*He assists* FLORA *to rise, and they go out by door on right. The* LANDLORD *returns and, speaking over his shoulder, says:*] I'll be getting you a bite and a sup o' kail. [*He busies himself at fire and at cupboard with dishes.* SEONAID *returns and sits down by fire.* LANDLORD *stirs kail-pot.*]

SEONAID. It's cold I am. She's lying down for a bit.

LANDLORD. Aye, a long journey that. And where now did you land, I wonder?

SEONAID. At Carsaig. We're for Duart. But there was a thick mist at Kinlochspelvie, and we missed our way.

LANDLORD. You'll have friends at Duart?

SEONAID. Aye, a brother o' this one.

LANDLORD. Well, well! "Bare is shoulder without brother," as the saying is. [SEONAID *makes a startled movement, and catches her breath.*] And she'll be kin to you, the lass ben?

SEONAID. A second cousin, goodman.

LANDLORD. So? It'll be a long time now, since you left Innis Fada?

SEONAID. A day and a night in the boat, and a day tramping the heather here.

LANDLORD. A long time that. I wonder now, will I be kenning the lad you're seeking?

SEONAID [*bitterly*]. You'll ken his name at least well enough. He was Seoras MacLeod, the sodger killed by the man that's to hang the morn.

LANDLORD. My pain and my longing! Is this the lad's sister?

SEONAID [*listlessly*]. Aye, but she kens nothing o' his death as yet. She thinks him only deadly ill.

LANDLORD. *Och, ochan!* [5]

SEONAID. Myself, I heard the truth but an hour back. A waif word from an auld wife by the roadside set me speiring.

LANDLORD. And you've said nocht to the lass?

SEONAID. I hadna the heart.

LANDLORD. This night, this night!

SEONAID. Was he long ill of his wound?

LANDLORD. Six days.

SEONAID. We only got his message, a poor shaky scrape it was, and no date on't, four days ago.

LANDLORD. It's taken months to reach you, has it?

SEONAID. Aye, it's a long road to Innis Fada when there's writing to do. It maun have miscarried, gone round by Kintail and Skye, I'm thinking.

LANDLORD. Poor lass!

SEONAID. *Ochanoch!* [6] It will kill her when she hears.

LANDLORD. Poor lass! [*He moves restlessly about, and at last goes to window.*] The moon's clear again. You maun keep her from seeing yon. It will set her to the asking of questions.

SEONAID [*joining him at window*]. The gallows! I didna ken it was to be here.

LANDLORD. Aye, just here. Poor Callum!

SEONAID. Callum?

LANDLORD. The lad that's to die the morn.

SEONAID. And you can be pitying him? Myself, I'm glad to see that gibbet, glad, glad!

LANDLORD. I'm no' sure 'twas Callum's hand that fired the shot, look you. The trial at Inneraora was none too fair.

SEONAID. Of course, of course! You'll be of the same tartan as Callum, I'm thinking?

[5] Alas, alas!
[6] Alas!

LANDLORD. Aye, and not 'shamed o't either.

SEONAID. And not 'shamed! I was thinking that would be the way o't! MacLeans! Unfriends to the King and a' that's kindly!

LANDLORD. And where's your King?

SEONAID [*evasively, as she controls her anger*]. Will I be taking up a sup to the lass?

LANDLORD [*muttering*]. MacLeods! MacLeods! [*Then in his usual tone.*] Indeed, yes. [*He fills a bowl with kail.*] But you'll no' be telling her this night?

SEONAID. She'll hear nothing from me till we're close on Duart the morn. His grave will be there?

LANDLORD. Aye, near by the Castle. Had ye no other friends in the Isle?

SEONAID. Only an acquaintance. A shipmaster. He came from hereabouts, and sailed our way sometimes. A MacLean he was. Iain Dubh by name.

LANDLORD. God shield us!

SEONAID. What's amiss, goodman? You ken him?

LANDLORD. Aye, I ken him. But he's from home, look you. Sailing the high seas he is. Yes. That's what he's at, yes; sailing the deep seas. Yes, yes. He's from home, is Iain.

SEONAID. You're the strange man.

LANDLORD. I am that. And these are the strange times, let me tell you.

SEONAID. Wheesht! I hear Flora stirring. She may be coming down. You'll let nothing slip your tongue about Seoras's death.

LANDLORD. Is it me? No, no. I'll be going, for I was ever the poor hand at hiding my own mind. Be saying to her that I've gone down to draw up the boats, will you? [*He goes out; and after a little Flora enters and sits down by the fire.*]

FLORA. I'm shivering. It's fine to see a fire. Where's the goodman? Did he have any word of Seoras?

SEONAID. What word would he have? The folks hereabouts are no' like our own people; they've no dealings wi' the sodgers.

FLORA. Poor Seoras! Was there no word of a plague in the countryside? I'm wondering if it was the plague that was in it with Seoras.

SEONAID [*filling bowls with soup from pot, and bringing scones from cupboard*]. Let your mind be at ease; for it's to-morrow we'll be at Duart. Say your grace, now, and take a sup and bite, for it's long fasting you are. [*They bend their heads in silent prayer, and then make a simple meal. The wind moans around the house. A step is heard on the gravel.*]

FLORA. There's the goodman's foot. I maun try him about Seoras. Maybe he'll be more open wi' me. [*Knock at door, and* IAIN DUBH *enters.*]

IAIN. Your pardon. Is himself at home? What! And is it Flora of Valtos, and Seonaid too? It's a far cry to Erisort! [*To* FLORA.] Whatever are you making of it here, lass? [*Both girls have risen in surprise.* FLORA *is blushing. She goes to* IAIN *and weeps on his breast.*]

FLORA. *Och,* Iain, Iain! but it's me that's glad to see you!

IAIN. You're ill, lass?

FLORA. Tired, tired. We've been long journeying.

IAIN. Sit you down now, for you're trembling, and as white's the *canach.* And what brings you to my calf-country? [FLORA *weeps silently.*]

SEONAID. She'll no' can tell you. We had word from her brother, Seoras, the first word since he ran away from home three years ago. We were to come to Duart. He was a sodger and lay deadly ill there.

FLORA. Is there plague in the garrison, Iain? Oh, I hope it will no' be plague.

IAIN. Plague! It might well be in a stack o' black stones like yon barracks. But I ken naught o' the countryside's news as yet. I'm but half an hour landed. You must ask the goodman.

FLORA. You've been sailing the wide world, Iain, I'm thinking, for it's little we've heard of you in Erisort this year and more.

IAIN [*with meaning*]. I ken what you're thinking, lass. Aye. Dunkerque, Havre, and the Baltic, many trips, and four months on this last. But it's sorry I am to hear of the poor lad, Flora. And yet—

FLORA. Yes?

IAIN. And yet a sodger like him'll be better in his bed the morn than out o't.

FLORA. For why?

IAIN. There's trouble in the countryside these days.

FLORA. What is't, Iain, this trouble?

IAIN. Don't ask me, lass. [*He sinks his face to his hands, then looks up, smiling.*] *Och,* but let us no' be thinking o't! It's yourself that's here, and that's the great matter.

FLORA. Iain, Iain! You've the great sorrow on you! What's amiss?

IAIN. I canna tell a' my mind, lass. Let's leave it there.

FLORA. It's the sore trouble, I'm seeing.

IAIN. It'll be gone then before the sun sets again, lass. I'll win through't. Never fear!

FLORA. And you'll can take me to Duart the morn!

IAIN. No' for a day or two, Flora. You maunna move out o' this till the trouble's over.

FLORA. My sorrow! To be so near Seoras, and to wait and wait!

SEONAID [*hurriedly*]. Wheesht you, lass! Iain kens best.

IAIN. Where's the goodman?

SEONAID. Down beaching the skiffs.

FLORA. Maybe you'll be getting more out o' him than incomers like Seonaid and myself, about Seoras, I mean. We'll wait up for him now you're here.

SEONAID [*alarmed lest the truth come out*]. Indeed then, and I think you're no' wise, Flora, and you dead tired. Myself, I'm worn out, and it's lying down I'll be. *Oidche mhath,*[7] Iain.

IAIN. *Oidche mhath,* Seonaid. [SEONAID *shakes hands with him and goes out.*] Come now, Flora, you'll no' be mourning

[7] Good-night.

for Seoras. If it's plague that's in it, he'll be up and about in two weeks' time or less.

FLORA. Aye, if he comes through.

IAIN. He'll be no brother o' yours if he doesna. Healthy as the deer, he should be: a Valtos man.

FLORA. I'm fearing.

IAIN. And some fine day soon we'll cross to Gualachaolish, and take through the hill to Duart. 'Tis there is the fine country, Flora, when the sun's out and shining bravely. You'll think yourself in Innis Fada again!

FLORA. You're sure you've the good hope of him, Iain?

IAIN. I'm sure, lass. And we'll be putting the mountain-moor under our feet; and we'll be together again. Think you o' that!

FLORA. Oh, Iain!

IAIN. And round us the lambs bleating, and the happy folk at the *cas-chrom* [8] or the peats!

FLORA. Like Innis Fada!

IAIN. Finer than Erisort itself is that same country! [*Then softly.*] But I'll be taking that back, for Erisort will ever be the dearest o' memories to me. The shieling above Keose, lass, eh?

FLORA [*smiling*]. I mind it well, Iain.

IAIN. White love! and can I be forgetting?

FLORA [*disengaging the hand which he has taken*]. But I mind too that you went off without the good-bye to me or any o' mine, Iain MacLean. I'm fearing you're the light-hearted one.

IAIN. Be you fair now, Flora! I had a hunted man to run to France. It was life or death, up anchor and go, never a moment to spare.

FLORA. You might well have sent some wee word at least to Flora MacLeod.

IAIN. I could send no word with safety, lass. Tearlach

[8] Foot-plough.

Og's is a hard service, you ken. But often I was for Erisort since then, yet aye failed till this run. Once I had cleared my business here, I was straight for Innis Fada.

FLORA [*mockingly*]. You tell me!

IAIN. It's fifteen months since I've seen you, my dear; and have not I been wearying sore?

FLORA. You aye had the soft tongue, Iain.

IAIN. *Mo chridhe!* [9] It's truth I'm giving you.

FLORA [*suddenly reminiscent*]. Oh, Iain! Do you mind when we first met! The wee lamb in the blackboyd bush, and me slashing away to set it free?

IAIN. And me, not knowing you were there, slashing away from the other side, and meeting you in the heart o' the thicket? 'Twas the droll ploy!

FLORA. 'Twas the bonnie lamb, yon!

IAIN. Mary Mother! And did not I get there the start! Seeing the finest face in all the world and it bleeding among the thorns!

FLORA. Scartit face or no', 'twas me was the first to get to the lamb.

IAIN. Indeed and you didn't then, Flora, for 'twas myself that put him in your arms.

FLORA [*irritably*]. *Och!* Maybe I was not there at all then! [*Then smiling radiantly.*] But, oh! wasn't he the wee darling?

IAIN. And wasn't he the ungrateful one, all the same? Never a *baa* by way of a thank-ye, but off to the old ewe in a scamper.

FLORA. Indeed and you're wrong now. For I thought he said something to me when I kissed his nose in the bush yonder.

IAIN. You only thought he did. I wouldna have so failed you, had you been as kindly to me.

FLORA. Now, aren't you the brazen one, Iain MacLean?

IAIN. The wooden one, more like, that I hadna the sense to profit by that bush o' brambles, and you fast held in it.

[9] My heart!

FLORA. What a man to rave!

IAIN. If only I'd been gleg enough!

FLORA [*rising*]. I think I'll be going.

IAIN. No, not going. [*His arm steals round her.*] Listen, white love! Fifteen months is a long time, and here at last is the day I've been wearying for. You'll no' be going, will you?

FLORA. Iain Dhu, but you've the sweet tongue. [*They kiss.*] Wheesht! There's the goodman's foot. I'd best be going. *Oidche mhath, mo chridhe!*

IAIN. *Oidche mhath!* Sweet sleep to you, my dear one! [FLORA *goes out by door on right. After a moment the* LANDLORD *enters by main door.*] I made nothing o' Kenandroma or Portmore, Donnacha. They're the white-livered lot. They'll no' move the morn unless the men from the brig are in the fight. [*The* LANDLORD *marches up and down the room in gloomy meditation, unheeding* IAIN.] What's come to you, Donnacha?

LANDLORD. The last curse, I'm thinking. [*He crosses to the door of the girls' chamber and listens there.*] His sister's here.

IAIN. Whose sister?

LANDLORD. The sister of Seoras MacLeod, the red-coat that was shot in Glenlussa.

IAIN. *Mo thruaighe!*[10] [*He rises, bewildered, as the truth dawns on him.*] Oh, Flora! Flora! [*He stumbles toward the door, and rushes out into the dark. At the outcry* FLORA *and* SEONAID *appear at the door of their room.*]

FLORA. Someone called, goodman.

LANDLORD [*distracted, shaking his fist savagely*]. MacLeods! MacLeods! Get you gone from under my roof; for it's the black destruction you've brought on Croggan! MacLeods! MacLeods! [*He goes out hastily after* IAIN.]

FLORA. I'm sure I heard my name cried out.

SEONAID. I wonder now.

FLORA [*looking from window*]. Oh! see, Seonaid! see! The moon's out, and there's a gallows-tree on the hill over.

[10] My woe!

It's the wild country this! [SEONAID *buries her face in her hands.*] What is't, Seonaid? You're hiding something from me, woman! I've felt it all night. What is't? Oh! it canna be! It canna be!

SEONAID. Wheesht, Flora, wheesht!

FLORA. It's no' for Seoras—yon? It wasna because o' yon he sent us word?

SEONAID. No, no, be thankit! But, my grief! My grief! It's killed he is, and yon's the gibbet for his slayer!

FLORA [*weeping*]. *Ochonarie! Ochonarie!* [11]

SEONAID. Wheesht you, lass! Wheesht! Here's this wild landlord back again. [*The* LANDLORD *appears, leading* IAIN, *dazed and distraught.* IAIN *signs by a finger on his lips that the* LANDLORD *is to keep silence.* FLORA *flies to* IAIN *and sinks weeping on his breast.*]

IAIN. Be leaving us, Donnacha. Seonaid. [SEONAID *goes out by door on right; the* LANDLORD *by door on left.*]

FLORA. Oh, Iain, you've heard? Seoras is killed on us.

IAIN [*brokenly*]. Aye, lass. I've heard. I never dreamt—

FLORA. *Ochonarie!*

IAIN [*comforting her*]. My dear! My dear!

FLORA. And now it's you are for some wild ploy the morn! And who kens, who kens, but you'll be lost on us also. You'll no' be going, Iain; you'll no' be going!

IAIN. My dear lass!

FLORA. Ah! you'll go; and you'll be lost on us as well as Seoras!

IAIN. I maun go.

FLORA. For why?

IAIN. To save a man that's innocent o' your brother's death, Flora.

FLORA [*going to window, and shrinking back from what she sees on the hill-top*]. Oh! Is't that? Iain, Iain!

IAIN. My poor lass!

FLORA. *Och!* Seoras! Seoras! Oh! the black day. And

[11] Alas! Alas!

what's to come to Flora MacLeod, wi' brother gone and lover gone? You'll no' do't, Iain? Iain?

IAIN. I canna let Callum die that gate.

FLORA. You'll never come back, I'm fearing. And then it's alone I'll be, alone, alone!

IAIN. My lass, my lass!

FLORA. Oh! it's home I'd be, home, home, in Erisort.

IAIN. Aye, and it's home you'll be, before long, Flora, dear, and it's the morn you'll sail too. The brig's no slow, lass! And it's soon you'll be home again. Poor Seoras! I'd give my right hand—

FLORA. Seoras! Seoras! Home! Home!

IAIN. My dear, my dear! Be you grieving your fill, for it's the sore trial. But it's in Erisort you'll be before two days are over. And some night of the clear moon we'll be going up to the old shieling again, you and me, and thinking o' the poor lad that's gone, and—

FLORA. Seoras! Seoras!

IAIN. And we'll be seeing the Loch like silver below us, and we'll be threading the old paths in the black gullies—

FLORA. Aye, aye! but the morn, Iain, the ploy the morn!

IAIN. Tach! It's but a little thing that! I'll win through, lass, I tell you.

FLORA. He didna do't, you say, this Callum?

IAIN. No.

FLORA. And who then? [*Now fiercely.*] Can you no' be laying your hands on the right man, and be done wi't without further bloodshed? It's killed you'll be, Iain!

IAIN. I think I ken the right man.

FLORA [*joyfully*]. And you're for seizing him the morn? Oh! gang to your ploy then, and a blessing wi' you! Bring him to the halter, and save your friend!

IAIN. My dear, my dear! Oh! what is't you're saying now! The man who slew your brother had no mind to do that same. He'd no desire of his death, Flora, lass.

FLORA. And what now? Oh, Seoras! Seoras! Is it to this it's come? You'd few friends in life, lad, and none in

death. You're slain, and all I get is words and words and words. Your blood cries out, and there's none will answer.

IAIN [*in anguish*]. Flora! Flora!

FLORA. Take not my name on your lips, Iain Dubh, if it's thus you're to fail me. There are men in Erisort still, be thankit! and some o' them'll be in Duart before long, once I tell them my story.

IAIN Flora, lass! [*He sinks to a chair, his head in his hands.*]

FLORA. What is't I'm saying! Iain, Iain! you've the great sorrow. My words are wild, and I'm not for seeing my way clear. I'm not for understanding this at all, at all.

IAIN. You're hard, lass, you're hard!

FLORA. *Mo thruaighe!* I've hurt you sore, Iain. Have pity on poor Flora! Her mind's not her own. Iain! Iain! Oh! to be back in Erisort wi' you, and forgetting all this blackness!

IAIN. Erisort? I wonder, will it ever be.

FLORA. Think you on Erisort, my man, for it's there we were happy. And now I'm seeing you've the trouble on you that's greater than mine, my love. Oh! your eyes so wild! *Mo chridhe!*

IAIN. I'm seeing it. I'm seeing it!

FLORA [*terrified and clinging to him*]. Is it the sight is on you, Iain?

IAIN [*coming to himself as if from a trance*]. I dinna ken, lass; but it was naught evil. 'Twas the old shieling above Keose, lass. [*His face becomes serene again.*] Aye, we'll be going there, Flora, when this dark day's but a memory that's faded. It will be moonlight there. And your face will be like the white moss, shining and shining in the night, my love, and the scent o' your hair finer than the bog-myrtle, and your words lovelier than the wee burns tinkling in the dark.

FLORA. Iain, Iain!

IAIN. And the snipe and the curlew will cry about us in the hill yonder. And down by the shore Keose will show a lit window or maybe two. And the Catechist's dog will be bark-

ing far below; and there will be a wee murmur o' talk floating up from the fishers at Cromore. And Flora MacLeod will be high on the hill above, her cheek on the bell-heather; but she'll no' be minding the roughness o' that pillow at all, for Iain Dubh, her lover, will be sharing it with her.

FLORA. *Mo chridhe!*

IAIN. And it's, oh! on that hill will be all the dark beauty o' the night, the stars burning, and the moon beaming, and your face the bonniest of all the things there, my dear!

FLORA [*yielding herself to his passionate embrace*]. *Mo chridhe!*

IAIN. *Mo thruaighe!* My lass, it's the strange world! But let us be keeping the stout hearts. This life's indeed the steep hill; but the day's long, and we'll be at the top yet.

FLORA. I'll be going now, Iain.

IAIN. Go you if you will, my dear. You're worn out.

FLORA. *Oidche mhath,* Iain. [*She kisses him.*]

IAIN. *Oidche mhath, m'eudail!* [12] [*She goes out wearily; and he sits down by fire to brood, gnawing at his finger-nails. He goes to window and looks out anxiously at sky. The wind is heard rising a little. The* LANDLORD *enters with* ALASDAIR.]

LANDLORD. I've been up on Maol Ban—

IAIN. The brig?

LANDLORD. The wind's full north—a gale. She's heading for shelter behind Kerrera.

IAIN [*with a despairing toss of his hands*]. Here's the end o' the rescue then.

LANDLORD. Aye, ye've lost the help o' twenty stout men wi' that wind, lad. Be thinking better o't.

IAIN. These cowards at Kenandroma and Portmore! The rest over there will be o' the same mind! We're done, Donnacha!

LANDLORD. Aye, we're done, Iain.

IAIN [*after a moment's gloomy meditation*]. I'll put a stop on this, though. I'm for Duart. Out wi' a boat, Alasdair!

LANDLORD. Man, man! What is't you're for doing?

[12] My treasure!

IAIN. I'm for the Major at Duart, I tell ye! If any's to hang, it maunna be poor Callum!

LANDLORD. Bethink you, lad! They'll hang ye both. Aye, and so wad they every MacLean in the Isle, if they dared.

IAIN. Out, Alasdair, out! I'm for crossing the Loch!

LANDLORD. You'll launch the skiff yourself then, and that you'll never do in a storm like this! Man! the squalls are coming off Craigaven like whooping devils, the Loch's foaming like a witch's pot.

IAIN. It's round by the head o' the Loch I'll be going then, Donnacha, even if I've to crawl on hands and knees. I'm for Duart this very night.

LANDLORD. You're flinging away your life, Iain MacLean; for Callum's doomed, whatever!

IAIN. Stop you! Rob More has a garron! I'll do't riding! [*He dashes out into the night.*]

LANDLORD. Cry up Portmore, Alasdair! Cry up Kenandroma! Haste ye! Tell them your story. Say that Iain Dubh's flinging away his life! I'll up to Rob's after him. Even if I've to hamstring his horse, he maun never make Duart! [ALASDAIR *stumbles out noisily. The clamour brings* FLORA *and* SEONAID *on the scene. They are in a state of alarm and disarray. Both wear short plaids on their shoulders.*]

FLORA. What's all the outcry for, goodman?

LANDLORD. MacLeods! MacLeods! Spawn o' traitors! Woe worth the day I ever set eyes on ye! MacLeods! [*He rummages in the aumry, seizes a rope, and runs out into the wind and rain.*]

FLORA. Whatever has come over him at all, at all!

SEONAID. I wonder what will it be?

FLORA. Wheesht you! I hear Iain's voice out there. Oh! *mo thruaighe!* What a world! [*She goes to open door and peers out into the dark.*] I hear him! Iain! Iain! Where are ye, my man? my man?

SEONAID. He's coming. I hear them. Yonder! [*They draw back as a posse of men enter with* IAIN DUBH *in their midst.* TWO CROFTERS *hold him; and his arms are bound to*

his side by a rope. The LANDLORD *and* ALASDAIR *are in front of him.* FLORA *brushes them aside, and goes to* IAIN.]

FLORA [*beseechingly*]. What's this of it, Iain! What's come to you at all, at all?

IAIN. It's the good-bye, lass. You and I maun twine.

LANDLORD [*whispering to* IAIN]. Wheesht you about yon, lad!

IAIN [*disregarding him*]. I tell't ye they had the wrong man for the gibbet, Flora. And that's true. 'Twas my hand held the black gun o' misfortune, and it's me should be in Callum's shoes the morn.

LANDLORD. Wheesht you, lad!

IAIN [*savagely*]. Aye, and it's there I'd be too, but for these meddlesome fools. God! But I'll make them rue it yet!

FLORA. Oh, Iain, lad! And was it you!

SEONAID [*picking up table-knife and dashing at* IAIN]. Scum o' the pit! Is't death you're seeking, Iain Dubh? [FLORA, *who is nearest, grasps her hand, disarms her, and tosses knife in fire.* SEONAID *crouches away from her in remorse*].

FLORA. Isn't there pain and sorrow enough in the world? [*The* LANDLORD *whispers to* FLORA.] Yes, yes, goodman, be taking him away to a safe place! What for should two men die the morn instead o' one!

IAIN [*bitterly*]. Aye! be taking me from this. For it's not one roof that should be covering her head and mine any more. Oh, *mo chridhe! mo chridhe!*

LANDLORD. Out for the shieling at Garmonyreoch, lads! [*They pass out slowly into the night with their prisoner. As* IAIN *crosses the threshold,* FLORA, *with a grave protective gesture, takes off her plaid and places it on his shoulders.*]

FLORA. Fare you well, my love, and for ever! [*Then, turning to* SEONAID, *she falls weeping on her breast.*] Oh! Seonaid, Seonaid!

[CURTAIN.]

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* For high school reference.

WORKS OF JOHN BRANDANE

NOVELS

My Lady of Aros
The Captain More

PLAYS

Glenforsa (with A. W. Yuill)
Rory Aforesaid
The Change-House
The Spanish Galleon
The Glen Is Mine
Full Fathom Five
The Lifting
The Treasure Ship

THE LITTLE FATHER OF THE WILDERNESS [1]

A Play in One Act

By

AUSTIN STRONG and LLOYD OSBOURNE

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INTRODUCTION

THE LITTLE FATHER OF THE WILDERNESS

Edna Kenton, the scholar whose name is associated with research in the field of the Jesuit *Relations*—a collection of documents comprised in seventy-three volumes—introduces thus her own selections from this mass of material:

> To America, with the first French colonists to Canada, came the Jesuits, men astutely trained in letters and fortitude, and men more astutely selected for their planned and ordered work. From 1611 to 1768 their reports—their *Relations*—of their life in North America were sent to the Superior at Quebec or to the provincial of their order in France, and these reports . . . are travel, exploration and adventure narratives of high dramatic calibre.

The North American Indian of the seventeenth century, his folklore and his religion, his mythology, his *mores,* his speech, and the routine of his daily life, live again in these reports and letters of the Jesuits. The course of intrigue and politics in New France, the competition for power between Church and State, amazing accounts of trade and exploration—of events like these are the *Relations* composed. The spirit of these documents animates *The Little Father of the Wilderness,* the joint work of Austin Strong and Lloyd Osbourne. Frontenac and Louis XV are, of course, historical personages; the character of Père Marlotte seems to be

moulded on that of any one of scores of Jesuit missionaries who gave themselves to religious labors in the wilderness. In this connection, Père Marquette comes most easily to mind. The grandest of the Jesuit fathers, the hero, with Joliet, of the Mississippi explorations (1673), Père Jacques Marquette, was born in 1637 and entered the Society in 1654. As a matter of fact, Père Marlotte and Père Marquette have only two things in common—their devotion to the idea of salvation for their Indian allies, and their intent to extend indefinitely the boundaries of France in the New World. In the play, Frontenac is shown espousing the cause of the modest and ineffable Père Marlotte, but, as is well known, there was bitter enmity between Frontenac and the organization maintained by the Jesuit Society in Canada. However, the historical and social background of this exceedingly effective one-act play by Austin Strong and Lloyd Osbourne is sufficiently accurate, and shows these joint authors to be possessed of real historical imagination.

Austin Strong has been successful as a writer both for the Little Theatre and for the commercial theatre. His recently published volume, *The Drums of Oude and Other One-Act Plays,* contains his most important contribution to the literature of the drama in brief. Pinero has said of the title play that it is "a model of what drama of its kind should be . . . proving that a short play is not necessarily a little one." *The Drums of Oude* is one of the most popular plays in the repertories of Little Theatres. Its scene is laid in Northern India in 1857. The events of the play are so arranged as to penetrate the audience with the feeling of authentic suspense. Fuses and powder magazines, catlike native Indian servants, the casual heroism of the English gentleman, constitute the author's paraphernalia. *The Little Father*

of the Wilderness (1905) has fewer elements of melodrama. It was, in a sense, designed to fit the personality of Francis Wilson, who relates in his autobiography that *The Little Father* was written to eke out an evening's entertainment when Clyde Fitch's adaptation from the French, *Cousin Billy,* was first given.

Two of Austin Strong's plays exhibit that rare quality enjoyed by only a few playwrights, an understanding of the heart of youth. *The Toymaker of Nüremburg* is a children's play of infinite charm. Mr. Strong's adaptation of Madame Rostand's *Le Bon Petit Diable,* made in 1913, adds to the original version an understanding of the psychology of childhood which is one of Mr. Strong's special gifts. Recently Austin Strong's longer plays, *Three Wise Fools* (1918) and *Seventh Heaven* (1922), have enjoyed popular favor.

Austin Strong was born in San Francisco, April 18, 1881. He is one of the writing kinsmen of Robert Louis Stevenson. Mr. Strong went to school in Monterey and in Samoa. He attended college at Wellington, New Zealand, adopting as his profession landscape architecture. This profession he practised until 1905, when he gave himself up wholly to writing for the stage.

The joint author of *The Little Father of the Wilderness,* Lloyd Osbourne, was the stepson of Robert Louis Stevenson. His collaborations with Stevenson, *The Wrong Box, The Wrecker,* and *Ebb Tide,* are well known. Lloyd Osbourne also collaborated with Strong in another play, *The Exile* (1903). Lloyd Osbourne was born in San Francisco on April 7, 1868. His education was obtained in private schools and at the University of Edinburgh. Mr. Osbourne and his mother first met Stevenson at Grèz-sur-Loing, in France, in 1876. Mr. Osbourne. in his book *An Intimate Portrait of R. L. S.,*

has included passages of autobiography which reveal interestingly the background and the character of the narrator. When Osbourne was eight years old, and before Stevenson's marriage to Mrs. Osbourne, the great romancer used to read *The Pilgrim's Progress* and *The Tales of a Grandfather* to the little boy, and tell him stories. Osbourne says: "He gave me a sense of protection and warmth, and though I was far too shy ever to have said it aloud, he seemed so much like *Greatheart* in the book, that this was my secret name for him."

Among the earliest of Osbourne's literary affairs was *Black Canyon or Life in the Far West,* which was composed during the period that Stevenson and his family were at Davos. Lloyd Osbourne had his own press on which he printed this little book of eight pages. He also turned off from this same press *Not I and Other Poems by R. L. Stevenson.* Both of these publications have become rare items of Stevensoniana.

Naturally, Stevenson took considerable responsibility for the education of his young stepson. Osbourne quotes R. L. S., expounding thus his theory of education:

> Of course, I let him read anything he wants. And if he hears things you say he shouldn't, I am glad of it. A child should early gain some perception of what the world is really like. . . . I have no patience with this fairy-tale training that makes ignorance a virtue. That was how I was brought up, and no one will ever know except myself the bitter misery it cost me.

There are many such revealing glimpses of Mr. Osbourne's early life in his *An Intimate Portrait.*

The nature of the process of collaboration has always been a problem. Just what part of *The Little Father of the Wilderness* belongs to Austin Strong and what part

to Lloyd Osbourne it is difficult to decide. A childhood spent in France must have given Osbourne an easy insight into French history and French character, but otherwise the contribution of each author defies identification. Osbourne, speaking of his collaboration with Stevenson on *The Wrong Box,* relates that he spent a winter on the manuscript and then showed it to Stevenson, who said: "Why, I could take up that book, and in one quick, easy rewriting make it *sing!*" That was the nature of the collaboration between Osbourne and Stevenson. I doubt whether Osbourne and Strong worked together in that way. Quantitatively the question is unimportant, but, as a study in the play of human minds, it has a certain interest.

CHARACTERS

Père Marlotte, *an heroic Jesuit priest.*
Frère Grégoire, *Franciscan friar.* Marlotte's *friend.*
Captain Chevillon, *of the King's Guard.*
Mlle. Henriette, Louis's *favorite of the hour.*
Louis XV.
Chevalier de Frontenac, *Governor of New France.*
Duke de St. Albret.
Extras for Ladies of Court and Suite, and Indians.

Scene: *An antechamber of the Palace of Versailles.*
Time: *Mid-eighteenth century.*

THE LITTLE FATHER OF THE WILDERNESS

SCENE: *An antechamber in the palace of Versailles. Throne-like seat to* L. *front. Two huge French windows at* L. *rear, looking out on the great gardens of Versailles. Grand double-door entrance at* R. *rear. Between windows and doors at rear is a table, upon which is a decanter encircled by wine-glasses. Fireplace at* R., *with lighted logs. Enormous chandelier hangs from the ceiling.*

TIME: *Eleven-thirty in the morning.*

Curtain rises on empty stage. Pause. Enter CAPTAIN CHEVILLON *of the King's Guard. A swaggering young soldier, in steel breastplate, lace collar, boots, etc. He enters angrily and gives a comprehensive glance about the room. Shakes the fire up. Then goes back to entrance and beckons contemptuously to someone without.*

CAPTAIN CHEVILLON [*coming down stage*]. This way, you two! Come on, come on! [*Crosses* L. *Enter* PÈRE MARLOTTE *and* FRÈRE GRÉGOIRE. *They stand on the threshold of the door and timidly look, awestricken, at the splendor of the room.* PÈRE MARLOTTE *is a little Jesuit priest, timid and white-haired. He carries in his arms a large wooden case containing an American raccoon, his shovel hat, a large green umbrella, and a bandanna handkerchief.* FRÈRE GRÉGOIRE *is a Franciscan friar in the conventional garb of his order—sandals, scapula, etc. He is the adoring and simple-minded comrade of* PÈRE MARLOTTE. *He is from* PÈRE MARLOTTE'S *native town, Bourron, and has never before been outside its narrow limits.*]

CAPTAIN CHEVILLON [*from front to them at rear*]. Don't stand there—come *here!* [*Indicates a spot on the carpet in front of him. The two little priests enter on a run, and care-*

fully look on the ground, and stand on the actual spot, looking up at the Captain with trepidation. Crosses to L.C. *Gruffly.*] Are you sure there is no mistake about this? Where are you from?

PÈRE MARLOTTE [R.C. *Gabbling inarticulately with fright*]. P-p-please, M-m-monsieur le Capitaine—

CAPTAIN CHEVILLON [*shouting*]. Can't you speak? Where are you from?

PÈRE MARLOTTE [*in terror*]. From the village of Bourron, may it please Your Excellency, Monsieur le Capitaine!

FRÈRE GRÉGOIRE [*ingratiatingly*]. Bourron, Monsieur le Capitaine!

CAPTAIN. Bourron! Never heard of it! Where's your order to see the King? [PÈRE MARLOTTE *first carefully puts down the caged raccoon on one side; then his umbrella on the other side; then his shovel hat and handkerchief in front of him; all the while never moving from the spot indicated by the Captain. He unbuttons his cassock at the bosom, and produces an enormous document, two feet long, heavily attached with seals, and hands it, trembling, to the Captain. After reading the document.*] The King commands your presence here—Père Marlotte—! Are you Père Marlotte?

PÈRE MARLOTTE. May it please Your Excellency, Monsieur le Capitaine, yes, I am Père Marlotte.

CAPTAIN. Thirty thousand pigs! What does His Majesty want to see you for?

PÈRE MARLOTTE. I do not know, Monsieur le Capitaine!

FRÈRE GRÉGOIRE [R.]. He does not know, Monsieur le Capitaine!

CAPTAIN CHEVILLON [L.C.]. Thunder of Man, you do not know!

PÈRE MARLOTTE [*bewildered*]. No—I—no—

FRÈRE GRÉGOIRE [*crosses to* C. *confidentially*]. The good father, Your Excellency, is overmodest! His Majesty the King has doubtless sent for him to reward and honor the greatest missionary of America!

PÈRE MARLOTTE [R.C. *deprecatingly*]. Please, my dear

Grégoire—my dear friend—no, it could not be possible His Majesty has heard of my poor work!

FRÈRE GRÉGOIRE [*valiantly*]. Not heard of the man who single-handed, who with no other weapon than his intrepid courage, his chalice and his crucifix, has won for his king a country greater tenfold than the size of France! Not heard of the man who, undeterred by sickness, wounds, starvation, and torture, has carried the Agnus Dei [*both cross themselves*] to the uttermost limits of that unknown and terrible country! Not heard of the hero of Wis-con-sing, who saved Frontenac and his entire army! Not heard—

CAPTAIN [*stops* FRÈRE GRÉGOIRE *by tapping him on the head with the immense document*]. Tut, tut, tut, mon brave! Save that for the pulpit and the flock! [*Crosses to* PÈRE MARLOTTE *and hands him the document.*] Here! The King will see you presently. Wait here. [*Goes toward door* B.R.C. *and then halts at the sight of the cage.*] What is that thing? [*Points.*]

PÈRE MARLOTTE [R.]. May it please Your Excellency—[*ingratiatingly*] I brought it all the way myself from Mescha-sippi! It is what is called a raccoon!

CAPTAIN [B.R.C.]. Thirty thousand pigs! What's it doing here?

PÈRE MARLOTTE [*with the first touch of pride*]. I have brought it as a present from Père Marlotte to His Majesty!

CAPTAIN [*laughing boisterously*]. Ha, ha, ma foi—that's good! Ha, ha, ha! [*Exit, laughing. The two little priests stare after him in silence. A pause.*]

PÈRE MARLOTTE [*turning his face to* GRÉGOIRE]. Why does he laugh, Frère Grégoire?

FRÈRE GRÉGOIRE [*shaking his head bewilderedly*]. I do not know, Père Marlotte.

PÈRE MARLOTTE [*wiping his forehead with handkerchief*]. Ah, good friend, no Sioux Indian at Quebec was ever more out of place than I here! [*Crosses to* L.C.B.]

FRÈRE GRÉGOIRE [*not listening, but gaping, head in air, at*

the splendor of the room]. O-oh—'tis magnificent, is it not! The Holy Father Himself would not be ashamed of such a room as this. 'Tis gorgeous— [*Goes about fingering the walls, furniture, etc.*] Superb—

PÈRE MARLOTTE [*serenely looking after him*]. Ah, good Grégoire, if you had lived for years under the sky and stars, the very thought of walls would stifle you! [*Then overcome at his own presumption.*] Oh, but I am such a barbarian!

FRÈRE GRÉGOIRE. Père Marlotte, you are trembling!

PÈRE MARLOTTE [*with a frightened laugh*]. *Am* I? When —when I think that in a moment His Most Christian Majesty will enter that door to speak to *me*—to me— I—I— Oh, Grègoire, what shall we do—what is correct? Shall we kneel—shall we kiss his hand— [*Looks at throne.*]

FRÈRE GRÉGOIRE. Oh, surely, yes!

PÈRE MARLOTTE. Come, good Grégoire, seat yourself there. [*Indicates throne.*] You be the King, and let us see how I acquit myself!

FRÈRE GRÉGOIRE [*staggered*]. I in His Majesty's throne!

PÈRE MARLOTTE. Yes, please, my dear Grégoire—my good Grégoire! For *my* sake! [PÈRE MARLOTTE *pushes the reluctant* GRÉGOIRE *onto the King's throne; then tiptoes to the doorway and looks out into the corridor. Reassures himself that no one is coming. Then, picking up the caged coon, walks with simple dignity to the throne, and kneels at* GRÉGOIRE'S *feet. After kissing* GRÉGOIRE'S *hand.*] Your Most Christian Majesty, I am here in obedience to your royal command— [*Kisses* GRÉGOIRE'S *hand.*] Now tell me to rise, Grégoire.

GRÉGOIRE [*with a kingly air*]. Rise, Père Marlotte! [*Then stands embarrassed, not knowing what to say next.*]

PÈRE MARLOTTE [*picks up cage and offers it to the* FRÈRE]. Now you say—"What is that, Père Marlotte?" [*Implying cage.*]

FRÈRE GRÉGOIRE [*in exactly the same voice*]. What is that, Père Marlotte?

PÈRE MARLOTTE [*with winning voice*]. A present from Père Marlotte to Your Majesty! [*As he hands cage to* GRÉGOIRE.] An American raccoon, Your Majesty!

FRÈRE GRÉGOIRE [*as he holds the cage awkwardly and looks around it at* PÈRE MARLOTTE. *Sits on throne with raccoon on lap.*] As Sovereign Lord of France we welcome you, Père Marlotte, to our palace at Versailles! We have sent for you, Père Marlotte, to offer you your well-deserved reward! [*Addressing an imaginary cardinal.*] My Lord Cardinal—[*business*] forthwith make Père Marlotte a bishop!

PÈRE MARLOTTE [*overcome at the thought*]. A bishop—O-oh— Frère Grégoire! [*Beams.*] It is wrong to be ambitious. [*A roll of drums and a fanfare of trumpets are heard without in the gardens.* GRÉGOIRE *skips off the throne, and they both hold onto each other in terror. They wait in silence. Nothing happens. They regain their courage.*]

FRÈRE GRÉGOIRE [*puts down cage*]. Now you be king, Père Marlotte, and let me try! [*Crosses to* L.C. PÈRE MARLOTTE, *with great pomp, marches to the throne, and seats himself with mighty dignity.*]

PÈRE MARLOTTE. Yes! I'll be King. [FRÈRE GRÉGOIRE *approaches humbly, and kneels. As the King.*] Père Marlotte—we have sent for you— [*Then anxiously.*] See if there is anyone outside the door, Grégoire! [FRÈRE GRÉGOIRE *looks out, and then, reassured, returns with pomp and kneels again at* MARLOTTE'S *feet.*]

PÈRE MARLOTTE [*as the King*]. Père Marlotte, we have sent for you—we—we— [*He sinks on throne with a groan.*] Grégoire!

PÈRE GRÉGOIRE [*not noticing anything wrong*]. Your Majesty— [*Then.*] What is the matter—good Father? Speak to me—you're ill! [PÈRE MARLOTTE *rises, assisted by* GRÉGOIRE.]

PÈRE MARLOTTE [*painfully, and pressing his closed fist to his breast in agony*]. Grégoire, the heart can forgive, but the body never forgets. [*With a gasp of pain.*] Ah!

FRÈRE GRÉGOIRE. What is it, Father? What is the matter?

PÈRE MARLOTTE. My wounds! The Indians! It was only their play! They knew not what they did!

FRÈRE GRÉGOIRE [*angrily*]. Only their play—'twas torture—torture!

PÈRE MARLOTTE [*still gasping with pain, yet with pride*]. But they didn't escape Père Marlotte! I baptized every one of them within the year!

FRÈRE GRÉGOIRE. The pitiless savages!

PÈRE MARLOTTE. Oh, no, no, good Grégoire. [*A pause.*]

FRÈRE GRÉGOIRE. You are better now, dear Father?

PÈRE MARLOTTE [*down* L.C., *still half supported by* GRÉGOIRE. *Cheerfully*]. It—it has passed. Ah, ah, Grégoire—I ought to be grateful indeed that my children spared me my eyes.

FRÈRE GRÉGOIRE. *Deo gratia!* [*Sudden roll of drums and fanfare of trumpets from without. Both cross themselves. They cling to each other and listen.*]

PÈRE MARLOTTE. His Majesty!

FRÈRE GRÉGOIRE. At last! [*Both run and carefully seek the spot indicated by* CAPTAIN CHEVILLON. *They stare restlessly at the doorway. No one appears.*]

FRÈRE GRÉGOIRE [R.C.]. His Majesty does not seem to be coming.

PÈRE MARLOTTE [*turns to audience, and gives a great sigh of relief, agitation, fear, and regret*]. His Majesty doesn't seem to be coming.

FRÈRE GRÉGOIRE. Go and look down the hall, Père Marlotte.

PÈRE MARLOTTE [*terrified*]. N-n-no—you go!

FRÈRE GRÉGOIRE [*more terrified*]. No—no—please! *You* go!

PÈRE MARLOTTE [*putting his arm through* GRÉGOIRE'S]. We'll *both* go! [*The two little priests gingerly tiptoe to the great doorway, and timidly peep out into corridor toward* R. *They come back to* L.C. *on a run, and cling to each other in terror.*]

FRÈRE GRÉGOIRE [*in a hoarse whisper*]. Did you see it?

PÈRE MARLOTTE [*in the same tone*]. Yes, I saw it— It's a woman!

FRÈRE GRÉGOIRE. Pray Saint Anthony she won't come here! [*A girl's voice is heard gaily singing and drawing nearer.*]

She's coming here—! [*Panic-stricken.*] What shall we do, Père Marlotte?

PÈRE MARLOTTE [*more panic-stricken*]. What shall we do, Grégoire? [*Enter* MLLE. HENRIETTE *in a rush, still singing gaily. She is young, pretty and vivacious. She stops in the middle of her song, and stares in astonishment at the two little priests, who stare back at her in terror.*]

HENRIETTE [R., *with a short laugh*]. Who are you?

PÈRE MARLOTTE [*backing* L.]. Père Marlotte and Frère Grégoire, Y-y-your Highness!

HENRIETTE [R.C.]. What are you doing here?

PÈRE MARLOTTE. I—I—we—we— Oh, Grégoire, what are we doing here?

FRÈRE GRÉGOIRE [*bowing timidly*]. Mademoiselle—His Majesty the King has deigned to command the presence of the famous American missionary, Père Marlotte!

HENRIETTE [*curiously*]. That little man? Famous—?

PÈRE MARLOTTE [*deprecatingly*]. Ah, Mademoiselle—my —my good friend here—is too—is too—

HENRIETTE [*crosses to* C., *interrupting*]. The King doesn't want to see you—he's playing tennis with St. Albret!

PÈRE MARLOTTE [*with timid triumph, pulling out the great document*]. Mademoiselle is mistaken. If Mademoiselle will graciously glance at this— [*Opens and presents the King's order for her to read.*]

HENRIETTE [*laughs, and knocks it up*]. Then he has forgotten all about you— [*Crosses to* R.]

PÈRE MARLOTTE [C., *turning bewilderedly to* GRÉGOIRE]. Forgotten?

FRÈRE GRÉGOIRE [*stoutly*]. It is not possible, Mademoiselle!

HENRIETTE [B.L.C.]. Possible— At Versailles— Oh, you little innocents, possible! [*Poignantly, as she presses her hand to her breast.*] Who can be sure that the King *won't* forget one tomorrow?

PÈRE MARLOTTE [B.C.]. The King has forgotten us, Grégoire!

HENRIETTE [*crosses to* MARLOTTE, *touched and indignant*]. Poor little man, it's a shame! He's always doing this— But you won't have to wait long. Stay here. [*Crosses to door* B.R.C.] I'll bring him—I'll *drag* him here by the ear! [*Flies out with her head in the air. The two little men stare solemnly at each other.*]

PÈRE MARLOTTE [L.C.]. Could he indeed have forgotten me, Grégoire?

FRÈRE GRÉGOIRE [*in warm denial*]. Oh, my dear Père Marlotte—

PÈRE MARLOTTE. But still—Grégoire! [*Looks at* GRÉGOIRE *worriedly.*]

FRÈRE GRÉGOIRE. The excellent Mademoiselle will surely bring him.

PÈRE MARLOTTE [*looking with awe at* GRÉGOIRE]. She said, Grégoire, she'd drag His Majesty here by the ear! [*Glances nervously toward entrance.*]

FRÈRE GRÉGOIRE [*significantly, in a hoarse whisper*]. She must be Mademoiselle Henriette— [*Behind his hand*]—the lady of the hour!

PÈRE MARLOTTE [*shocked, and with sudden sternness*]. Grégoire!

FRÈRE GRÉGOIRE [*collapsing*]. I mean—Père Marlotte—I think—

PÈRE MARLOTTE [*thundering*]. Silence—! Defame not him—[*points heavenward*] who is God's anointed! [GRÉGOIRE *tells his beads, abashed at the rebuke.* PÈRE MARLOTTE *goes to door and looks out. Then turns, with a sigh of disappointment.*]

PÈRE MARLOTTE. No sign of him, Grégoire!

FRÈRE GRÉGOIRE [L.C.]. Never fear. Many men have waited longer than this for a bishopric!

PÈRE MARLOTTE [C., *his face lighting up*]. Bishop— I a bishop! Oh, do you think so, Grégoire? No, a bishop's too high—some trifling preferment, perhaps— Do you think—?

FRÈRE GRÉGOIRE. Nothing too high for Père Marlotte!

PÈRE MARLOTTE [*taking out the King's order and looking at it lovingly*]. It *must* mean *something*, Grégoire.

FRÈRE GRÉGOIRE. Why else should His Majesty send all the way from Versailles to Bourron if not to give you your just and well-deserved reward?

PÈRE MARLOTTE [*in excited recollection*]. Oh, Grégoire, I was standing on the threshold of my little house in Bourron—it was dusk—I looked up the village street, when *voilà*—whoopla—the children scream—the geese scatter—then gallop, in breast-plates and scarlet, arrives a troop of the King's Guard! I listen—they stop—what do they say? A royal messenger from His Majesty the King! For whom? For whom? [*With emotion.*] Père Marlotte! [*Appealingly.*] Ah, Grégoire, it must mean something.

FRÈRE GRÉGOIRE. Listen! [*Gay voices are heard approaching.*]

PÈRE MARLOTTE [*grabbing up his umbrella, hat, and caged raccoon*]. The King! [*Enter* CAPTAIN CHEVILLON, *of the King's Guard—stands on the threshold and looks at the two men critically.*]

CAPTAIN CHEVILLON [*pointing to* R.]. Stand over there! [*They hastily run to spot indicated.*] Put that down! [PÈRE MARLOTTE *puts cage hastily down.* CHEVILLON *then looks down the corridor, hastily stiffens, and stands at the salute.* PÈRE MARLOTTE *and* FRÈRE GRÉGOIRE *fall on their knees, with bent heads and hands as in prayer.* LOUIS XV *enters, with* HENRIETTE *and a group of women, all laughing and talking at once. The* KING *is being partly dragged in. He is playfully reluctant.* HENRIETTE *has both hands on his waist.* LOUIS *is in black, with a lace collar. He wears his hat throughout. His voice is loud and strident. The* KING *is in one of his frivolous and boisterous moods. He carries a basket of Spaniel puppies, the basket slung around his neck by a blue ribbon.*]

LOUIS [*petulantly*]. Now really—now really—I don't know what you ladies are talking about— What is this, now?

What is this, now? Look here, now—look here— [*As he perceives the kneeling men.*] *What!*

HENRIETTE. There they are, the two of them!

LOUIS [*crosses to* C.—*to* PÈRE MARLOTTE *and* GRÉGOIRE]. What's all this? Here, don't kneel to me like that! Get up, get up! [*As they obey.*] Now what's all this?

PÈRE MARLOTTE [R.]. Your Majesty, *I* am Père Marlotte!

LOUIS. Père Marlotte! Marlotte! Who the devil's Marlotte? Where are you from?

PÈRE MARLOTTE. From Bourron, Sire.

LOUIS [*to ladies*]. Bourron! Where's Bourron?

PÈRE MARLOTTE. It is on the Seine, Monseigneur.

LOUIS [*petulantly*]. I sent for you— Did I *send* for you?

PÈRE MARLOTTE [*humbly*]. May it please Your Majesty— [*Hands him the order.*]

LOUIS [*taking it carelessly, and half glancing at it with a bored expression*]. It seems all right. I *sent* for you? What for? What for— It doesn't say here what for. [*Hands document back.*]

PÈRE MARLOTTE [*very white*]. Perhaps Your Most Christian Majesty has heard something of my poor work?

LOUIS. Work! [*Turning to the ladies and raising his eyebrows.*] Have we heard anything of this man's work?

PÈRE MARLOTTE. In Canada, Sire, amongst the Indians—the American Indians.

LOUIS [*with contracting brows*]. Canada— Canada—Ah, yes—I remember now—a priest from Canada! What for? What for? What did I send for you for? Let me think! Canada!—Priest— [LOUIS *puts his right hand to his mouth, and looks at the floor, and thinks. Silence. Suspense.* PÈRE MARLOTTE *turns a white face to* GRÉGOIRE.]

LOUIS [*turning, puzzled, and scratching his head*]. Henriette, do you know why I sent for this little man?

HENRIETTE [L.C., *sadly*]. I haven't the remotest idea! [*There are tears in her voice.*]

LOUIS. Oh, I have it! Of course—! Look here! [*Runs to entrance like a boy, talking excitedly.*] Don't you remem-

ber—Henriette! Isabelle! Louise! [*To* CAPTAIN.] Get St. Albret! [*Exit* CAPTAIN CHEVILLON. LOUIS *standing in the doorway and shouting.*] St. Albret! Here, St. Albret! [*Then laughs.*] Ha, ha! Now you'll see if I wasn't right—now you'll see!—I said I was right—I know I was right—[*Calling.*] St. Albret! St. Albret! [*Rubbing his hands delightedly and smiling at the ladies. Hands basket of puppies to* CAPTAIN CHEVILLON, *now returned, who removes them.*] Fifty louis, Mesdames! Fifty louis!

HENRIETTE [*coldly*]. Wasn't it sixty?

LOUIS. Ha, ha! You're right—sixty! All the better! Sixty! Hurry, St. Albret! Hurry, St. Albret! [*Enter the* DUKE DE ST. ALBRET, *an empty-headed, foppish young courtier. He addresses the* KING *with a mixture of deference and boon companionship.*]

ST. ALBRET. You sent for me, Sire?

LOUIS [*convulsed with laughter, as he takes* ST. ALBRET *by the lapel of his coat and brings his face close to his own.*] Ha, ha! Now, rash young man! Ha, ha! You'll set up your popinjay opinion against royal France! [*Strikes his breast.*] Got sixty louis?

ST. ALBRET [L.C., *puzzled*]. Pardon, Sire—

LOUIS [*turning, and pointing front to the priests*]. Look—what I have brought you!

ST. ALBRET [*in a guffaw*]. What, the missionary from Canada—you sent for him! [*Then with eager excitement.*] Now you'll see if I'm not right! [*With significance.*] Have *you* got sixty louis?

LOUIS [*laughing*]. Have I! [*Calling.*] Henriette—come here—now you hold the stakes! [HENRIETTE *holds her skirts up in front of her like an apron.*]

ST. ALBRET [*pouring money out of his purse into her lap*]. I wish I'd made it six hundred now!

LOUIS [*searching each of his pockets carefully and finding nothing*]. Why—why—it seems that I haven't any money!

ST. ALBRET [*shouting*]. No, you don't, Sire! Put up your money! I want to see money!

LOUIS. Cruel—cruel St. Albret—before the ladies, too—the poor ladies—ahem—[*crosses to ladies of court circle to* C. *again*—ST. ALBRET *follows*] but I must ask the ladies—for—for—a little assistance. Have any of you got sixty louis? [*Passes his hat playfully about. They all shake their heads and turn their backs saucily on him.*]

HENRIETTE. Give him nothing—His Majesty still owes me a hundred pistoles!

LOUIS [*as he passes his hat*]. Pity a poor King. [*They remain adamant. He turns helplessly toward* ST. ALBRET.]

ST. ALBRET [R.C., *unmoved*]. Money up, Your Majesty!

LOUIS [*trying to carry it off*]. It's all right, mon cher. I'm going to win. There's no need of all this!

ST. ALBRET [*stolidly*]. Money up, Your Majesty! [LOUIS, *sighing, as he draws off ring from his finger and drops it into* HENRIETTE'S *lap.*]

ST. ALBRET [*to* C. *as all turn to the priests*]. Now!

LOUIS [*to* PÈRE MARLOTTE]. Little man—what's your name again?

PÈRE MARLOTTE [*picking up hope*]. Marlotte, Sire; Père Marlotte! [LOUIS *crosses to* MARLOTTE.]

LOUIS. Marlotte—yes—that's it. Now what we want to know is— [*With a change of voice.*] Wait a moment—St. Albret, let's get this right. I said three miles, didn't I?

ST. ALBRET. No, you don't, Sire. Four miles—four miles. Henriette, didn't His Majesty say four miles?

HENRIETTE [*regarding the priest sadly*]. Yes—he did!

LOUIS. Well—four miles, then!

ST. ALBRET [*to* PÈRE MARLOTTE]. Now, listen, you priest—

LOUIS [*stopping him*]. No, let me put it to him—

ST. ALBRET. Your Majesty, wait—now, look here, priest—[*Crosses to priest.*] Answer truthfully. His Majesty being His Majesty mustn't make any difference—understand? [PÈRE MARLOTTE *bewilderedly nods assent.*]

LOUIS [L.C., *laughing*]. Ha, ha! That's all right, St. Albret— A cat may be right when a King is wrong.

ST. ALBRET. The cat *is* right this time, Your Majesty! [*All laugh.*]

LOUIS [*crosses to* MARLOTTE]. Now you, Père Marlotte, it's absolutely true you've been in America?

PÈRE MARLOTTE. Ah— [*Pressing his hands to his breast.*] Ah, Your Majesty, yes.

LOUIS. I have sent for you, Père Marlotte, all the way from your village—

PÈRE MARLOTTE [*pleadingly*]. Pardon—one moment, Sire! [*Leaves the King astonished as he rushes up front, takes up the huge cage, and running back with it, forces it into the King's arm. Breathlessly.*] A present from Père Marlotte to Your Majesty—an American raccoon, Sire! [*The ladies giggle.*]

LOUIS [*angrily*]. Tut, tut, tut! [*Hands the cage to* CAPTAIN CHEVILLON, *who has come up for that purpose, purple with rage.*] Listen to what I'm saying—I have sent for you—

PÈRE MARLOTTE [*eagerly*]. Yes, Your Majesty!

LOUIS. To decide a bet!

PÈRE MARLOTTE [*stunned*]. A bet, Sire!

LOUIS. Yes, yes, a bet! *I* say that the Falls of Nia-gára are four miles high; and St. Albret here insists that they are not. Now, who is right?

PÈRE MARLOTTE [*helplessly looking at the King*]. A bet, Sire!

LOUIS. Yes, yes. [*Petulantly.*] Can't you speak! Answer! Which of us is right?

PÈRE MARLOTTE [*turning a white face to the audience*] Your—Your Majesty is *wrong!*

ST. ALBRET [*with a yell of triumph*]. Yah, I've won! [*Crosses room.*] I *knew* I was right! [*Collects money from* HENRIETTE'S *lap.*]

LOUIS [*sternly*]. Little man, do you tell the truth? Are you sure you've been there? Have you seen these Falls of Nia-gára?

PÈRE MARLOTTE. Yes, Sire, I said the first Mass there.

LOUIS [*gives* MARLOTTE *his hand carelessly to kiss as a*

sign of dismissal; and as PÈRE MARLOTTE *falls on his knees, he turns to the others, talking at the top of his voice*]. Now, I don't care—somebody told me they were four miles high. I'd like to know who it was—four miles high—he said four miles high—I know somebody said it was four miles high— [*All talk at once, as the King goes rear* L. *and is surrounded by the ladies.* PÈRE MARLOTTE, *left on his knees, tries vainly to rise to his feet. Is helped up by the faithful* GRÉGOIRE, *who picks up for him and hands him his umbrella, his great shovel hat, and his bandanna handkerchief. The two little men give one farewell look at the group, forlornly turn their backs to the audience, and start toward the doorway.*]

ST. ALBRET [*running excitedly up to the two and forcing a handful of louis into* PÈRE MARLOTTE'S *hand—boisterously*]. Good for you, little priest! Take this for your trouble. [*Runs back and rejoins the others.* PÈRE MARLOTTE *looks helplessly at the money in his hand, unheeding the coins that drop to the floor.* GRÉGOIRE *makes a motion to go forward.*]

CAPTAIN [*coming up angrily, and forcing the large cage into* PÈRE MARLOTTE'S *arms*]. Here, take this away! [*He half pushes and shoos them toward door.*]

HENRIETTE [*who has been watching the little priest throughout with compassion.*] Stay, Captain Chevillon. [*Crosses to* MARLOTTE. *Exit* CAPTAIN, C. *She takes the caged raccoon from* PÈRE MARLOTTE *and puts it on the floor, and then regards the priest. In a tender voice.*] There are tears in your eyes, good Father—you're as pale as death. Come, let me give you a glass of wine before you go. [*She puts an arm about him, and leads him, together with* FRÈRE GRÉGOIRE, *into the window recess at rear, and pours them both out some wine. Fanfare of trumpets.*]

LOUIS [*petulantly*]. Now what's that? Have I got to see anybody else this morning?

CAPTAIN [*entering, and coming up close to the King, with a salute*]. Sire!

LOUIS [*crossly*]. Well?

CAPTAIN. Chevalier de Frontenac, Governor and Lieu-

tenant-General of Your Majesty's American Dominions, awaits with his suite Your Majesty's royal pleasure.

LOUIS [*delighted, and clapping his hands*]. Ah, Frontenac! Bring him, Chevillon, bring him! [*Exit* CHEVILLON.] Ah, the good news! Ladies, St. Albret—Frontenac is here! In France! [*Rubbing his hands.*] My brave Frontenac! We must receive him properly! [*Goes up to his throne and seats himself, while the others group themselves about him.* ST. ALBRET *kneels, and places the footstool for him.*]

CAPTAIN [*entering and announcing*]. The Governor and Lieutenant-General of Your Majesty's American dominions, Chevalier de Frontenac! [*Trumpet—drums. Pause.* MARLOTTE *is seen at rear to start and stare wildly.* HENRIETTE *is astonished by his action, and puts her arm protectingly around him.* FRÈRE GRÉGOIRE *stands behind* MARLOTTE. *Enter* CHEVALIER DE FRONTENAC, *a magnificent old soldier, in steel breastplate, with scarlet ribbon to which hangs an order. His rugged face is deeply bronzed. His moustache and imperial are snow-white. His suite follow. Their splendid uniforms, faded and battle-worn, are eked out with moccasins, buckskins, etc. Amongst them two Indian chiefs, almost naked, with feather headdresses. The suite all follow the example of* FRONTENAC *as he falls on one knee before the King's throne.*]

LOUIS. Rise, Messieurs! [*They rise.* LOUIS *rises himself. His voice becomes noble, kingly and sincere, in marked contrast to his previous frivolity.*] Chevalier de Frontenac, and these valiant gentlemen, it gives me great pleasure to welcome you home to France! For the last six years we have followed with admiration and approval every step of your undaunted career! From Quebec to Wis-con-sing, from Mackinaw to the Mes-cha-sippi, your King has ever been with you, sharing your hardships, your perils, your heroism, and your triumphs! Ah, Chevalier de Frontenac, and you, Messieurs, you have ever had a loyal supporter in your King. Let history do me the justice to say that, however much I may have fallen short myself, my reign has been illumined and made glorious by such names as yours! Gentlemen, from my heart I welcome you!

CHEVALIER DE FRONTENAC. Your Majesty, would that we had the words to give voice to what is so inarticulate here! [*Strikes his breastplate with his gauntleted fist.*] Let our deeds instead speak for us, and accept our gratitude in an Empire.

LOUIS [*descending from his throne, and shaking hands warmly with* FRONTENAC, *throwing ceremony aside*]. Welcome, my good friend—thou wast not more eager to see France than I thee! [*Turning to the ladies.*] But there are others also! Henriette— [*The crowd parts so that a lane is opened, showing* HENRIETTE *at rear beside* PÈRE MARLOTTE.]

LOUIS. Ah, Henriette, come and add your greeting to these noble gentlemen!

CHEVALIER [*perceiving* PÈRE MARLOTTE]. What, is it possible— Père Marlotte!

THE AMERICAN SUITE. Père Marlotte! Père Marlotte! The Little Father of the Wilderness!

PÈRE MARLOTTE [*advancing tremulously, with both hands raised*]. My children! [*The* CHEVALIER, *his suite, and the two Indian chiefs kneel like one man at the feet of the little priest. The Indians kiss the hem of his cassock.* PÈRE MARLOTTE *puts his hands tremblingly on his breast, and stares at the King, terrified at being so honored before him.*]

CHEVALIER [*turning to the King, but still on his knees*]. Your Majesty has deigned to praise us for our deeds in America—but here stands the greatest of us all, Père Marlotte!

LOUIS. Père Marlotte!

LADIES. Père Marlotte!

FRONTENAC [*still on his knees*]. Sire, my conquests in the New World have left little, I fear, but whitened bones, while the victories of this little priest, victories of peace, of love, of savage hearts won and kept, will endure forever. The Lilies of France would have perished in those dark and savage forests had it not been for the blood and the tortured body of Père Marlotte! Ah, Your Majesty, France owes a tribute indeed to the Little Father of the Wilderness!

LOUIS [*comes up to* PÈRE MARLOTTE—FRONTENAC *makes*

a movement to rise—LOUIS *raises his hand*]. Stay, Frontenac! [LOUIS *halts in front of* PÈRE MARLOTTE *and regards him in silence. A pause.*] The Sovereign of France stands before you, Père Marlotte, ashamed; and he, with his Court, kneels to ask the blessing of the Archbishop of Toulouse! [*Then* LOUIS, *with all his Court, kneels at the feet of* PÈRE MARLOTTE, *and the curtain goes down as the little priest, trembling, raises his hand and silently blesses them with the sign of the cross.*]

[CURTAIN.]

BOOKS HELPFUL IN THE STUDY OF "THE LITTLE FATHER OF THE WILDERNESS"

George Bryce: *A Short History of the Canadian People.* New York, 1914.

Edna Kenton: *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents.* New York, 1925.

* Lloyd Osbourne: *An Intimate Portrait of R.L.S.* New York, 1924.

[With Robert Louis Stevenson]: *The Wrong Box.* New York, 1888.

[With Robert Louis Stevenson]: *The Wrecker.* New York, 1899.

[With Robert Louis Stevenson]: *The Ebb Tide.* New York, 1894.

[With Austin Strong]: *The Exile.*

* Frances Parkman: *Count Frontenac and New France Under Louis XIV.* Boston, 1905.

* Austin Strong: *The Drums of Oude and Other One-Act Plays.* New York, 1926.

The Toymaker of Nüremburg, in M. J. Moses's *A Treasury of Plays for Children.* Boston, 1926.

Three Wise Fools.

* For high school reference.

THE ARTIST [1]

A Duologue

By

A. A. MILNE

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INTRODUCTION

THE ARTIST

Alan Alexander Milne is one of the inheritors of the Lamb tradition in English letters. Milne, too, is a past master of the familiar essay, but, being a happy, healthy man, he indulges rarely in the eternal note of sadness. There is no minor key sounded in his brilliant little papers. The laughter of things, surface gaieties, the comedy of existence, furnish Milne with themes dulled neither by an undertone of pathos nor by a background of disaster. As Milne himself once wrote, in his preface to *Happy Days,* "This sort of writing depends largely upon the irresponsibility and high spirits of youth for its success, and I want to stop before (may I say 'before'?) the high spirits become mechanical and the irresponsibility a trick." *Happy Days* contains also the essay in dialogue form which is frequently found in Milne's prose writings. His facility in this form forecasts his later success in light comedy. *Oranges and Lemons,* the title of one such narrative-dramatic essay, introduces a set of characters which Milne used several times in writing of this kind. Samuel Simpson, Archie and Dahlia Mannering, Archie's sister Myra and her husband, and Thomas Todd of the Admiralty, exhibit, through the medium of their aptly characterizing dialogue, the humors of an enchanted February in a borrowed villa on the Riviera.

Before the Great War and after, Milne contributed to London papers, such as *The Star, The Outlook,* and *The*

Sphere, the essays later collected in *Not That It Matters.* His other volumes of prose and light verse, *The Holiday Round, Once a Week,* and *The Day's Play* are made up of his contributions to *Punch,* which he served as assistant editor from 1906 to 1914. Their extravagant humor is, as has been observed, the natural expression of a high-spirited and fortunate youth of pre-war England. Their polished irony has the Augustan flavor which the English public school—Milne was a Westminster boy—still knows how to distill as a byproduct of profound application to classical sudies. W. J. Turner, reviewing Milne's play *The Truth About Blayds* for *The Spectator,* suggests the impermanence of that society of which Milne wrote so brightly and so agreeably in the days before 1914. Turner calls Milne's locale, " the England of *Punch,* that small interior island of upper middle-class civilization which is so rapidly being swamped by hordes of barbarians both from above and below."

The poems interspersed in several of these volumes of essays belong to that body of " society verse " to which Locker-Lampson, Sir Owen Seaman, J. K. Stephen, and Calverley have added their illustrious quota. Possibly the most frequently reprinted of Milne's verses, and hence the best known, is *From a Full Heart,* from which the following lines are quoted:

When the War is over and the Kaiser's out of print,
I'm going to buy some tortoises and make the beggars sprint;
When the War is over and the sword at last we sheathe,
I'm going to keep a jellyfish and listen to it breathe.

Most recently Milne has become a poet of childhood, his verses vying with Stevenson's in the affection of children and lovers of children. The Christopher Robin of *When*

We Were Very Young and *Winnie-the-Pooh* has become an immortal figure.

Youthful taste in literature, in particular youthful taste in the theatre, has been discussed by Milne in his essay *Children's Plays* (*If I May*): "Very young children," he writes in this play, "do not want humour or whimsicality or delicate fancy or any of the delightful properties which we attribute to the ideal children's play —all that they want is a continuous procession of ordinary everyday events—the arrival of elephants (such as they see at the Zoo), or of postmen and policemen (such as they see in their street), the simplest form of clowning or of practical joke, the most photographically dull dialogue." And later in the same essay and somewhat inconsequently: "A nice child would love *Hamlet*." *Make-Believe* is the sort of play that, Milne asserts, children like, and, indeed, many have liked the pantomime humors of this extravaganza for very young people.

A. A. Milne's plays are, with the exception of *Make-Believe,* and certain passages of fantasy in plays like *Success* and *The Romantic Age,* in the tradition of the English comedy of manners. *The Truth About Blayds,* which tells the story of a literary cheat whose hoax is perpetuated by a parasitic family, presents a theme which would have been congenial to Ben Jonson. The "Great Broxopp" has a touch of the same Ben Jonson's Alchemist about him. The two brothers of *The Lucky One* are variants of Joseph and Charles Surface. *To Have the Honour* is a study of English society conventionalized as to character types and conversational give-and-take in the very fashion of Wilde or the Pinero of the nineties. But Milne exhibits another tendency, equally strong, I think, in his invention: at times recoiling from the hard surfaces of upper-class English society, he turns to

fantasy. Dream situations are, for example, an integral part of the plot of *Success* and of *The Boy Comes Home.* Extravagances amounting almost to fantasy characterize the plot improbabilities of *Belinda*—a happily turned version of the Enoch Arden complication—and of *The Romantic Age,* which, like Barrie's *Dear Brutus,* relies on the vagaries of midsummer night "dreams" for the resolving of its problems. Mr. Milne has, as he is proud to let us know, been encouraged by his friend, J. M. Barrie.

As a playwright, Milne has continued working the vein of satire first explored in his urbane weekly essays. *Wurzel-Flummery* and *The Great Broxopp* hold up to ridicule the sensitiveness of the genteel classes to grotesque family names—the theme treated by Charles Lamb in his ill-fated farce. *The Great Broxopp* is no less a good-humored attack on the kind of advertising that is at once grandiloquent and dishonest. *Mr. Pim Passes By* pillories the light-minded, irresponsible, well-meaning, but dangerous mischief-maker. *Success,* as its name suggests, expounds the hollowness of mere material advancement. *The Lucky One* presents sad commentary on the results of unequal fraternal competition. *Ariadne* is a study of a marriage in which the husband's attitude toward his wife's honor is determined by his business interests. This enumeration indicates sufficiently the range of Milne's ideas.

Besides *The Artist,* Milne has written at least six other one-act plays. The most recent of them, *Portrait of a Gentleman in Slippers,* is a gay, brief morality with traditional fairy characters. Both *The Camberley Triangle* and *The Stepmother* deal seriously with situations, arising from violations of moral laws, that stop just this side of tragedy.

Milne, in the introduction to the volume *Second Plays,* discusses with disarming humor his intentions as a playwright. He disclaims ironically familiarity with the æsthetic of Strindberg and Aristotle. His dramaturgy he sums up in two precepts: "The first is that rules are always made for the other people; the second is that, if a play by me is not obviously by me, and as obviously not by anybody else, then (obviously) I had no business to write it."

The author of *The Artist,* playwright, essayist, writer of society verse, children's poet, and finally adept in the concoction of a mystery story, was born in 1882. In a recently published brief passage of autobiography,[1] he remembers with affection the days of his childhood, especially such adventures as were lovingly shared with his older brother John. "We all have our dreams," he writes, "as we wait for sleep to come to us." His favorite going-to-sleep fantasy concerned plans of what they would do were they to wake up and find themselves the only live people in the world. These reminiscences record a nursery dramatization of a weird tale about an impecunious governess who successfully married a noble lord. At eight years of age, Milne was contributing to a school paper, founded ten years previously by a boy of the name of Harmesworth, whose vocational tendencies were thus early indicated. Milne relates that another contributor to this same little paper was H. G. Wells, a young science master.

Milne's public school, as has been said, was Westminster. One of his biographers tells the story of how an issue of *The Granta,* the Cambridge undergraduate publication, came under the eye of young Milne. "While he

[1] A. A. Milne, "When *I* Was Very Young," *Woman's Home Companion,* Vol. LII, No. 12, pp. 23-24. New York, 1925.

and another [Westminster] boy were looking through it, the other boy said gravely, 'You ought to edit this some day,' and he as gravely replied, 'I will.'"[2] Milne, as undergraduate at Trinity College, in 1902, did become editor of this famous college paper.

Milne's family desired to see him established in the Indian Civil Service or as a schoolmaster, but he saved sufficient from his Cambridge allowance for a year in London. His success as man of letters seems, from the first, to have been assured. After his experience as assistant editor of *Punch* came the War. Milne's service lasted till 1919, when he resigned from the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, that he had joined four years earlier. His plays belong to his post-war period.

[2] St. John Adcock, "A. A. Milne," *The Bookman,* Vol. LXIX, p. 143. London, 1925.

THE ARTIST

CHARACTERS

HE
SHE

SCENE: *It is the hall of a country cottage—a man's cottage. Through the open door from the garden a woman comes suddenly. She looks behind her to see that she is not followed; round the hall to see that she is alone; then gets to work. It is a letter she is wanting; one which has just come by post, and should be waiting here for its owner. Now she is at the writing-desk, and she is no longer alone. There is a man at the open window. With a sigh of relief she has picked up half-a-dozen letters from the desk, and is beginning to look through them, when he interrupts her.*

HE [*politely*]. Yes?

SHE. Oh, how you startled me! [*She sees that it is a stranger.*] Oh!

HE. How do you do? I'm sorry I startled you.

SHE. Yes. You see, your being the wrong person made it particularly startling.

HE. That would make it worse, of course.

SHE. I thought you were going to be Mr. Matheson.

HE. I'm afraid I'm not.

SHE. Oh, well, it isn't your fault. I expect he got the name first.

HE. Was Mr. Matheson expecting you?

SHE. Yes. . . . Or rather, no.

HE [*politely*]. Just as you like.

SHE. Thank you very much. Then I think perhaps it's—it's— No.

HE [*nodding*]. The noes have it.

SHE. You see— It's dreadfully hot today, isn't it?

HE. Dreadfully.

SHE. Yes, I don't know when I've been so hot.

HE. It's hot work, of course.

SHE. What is?

HE [*waving a hand at the desk*]. That sort of thing.

SHE [*indignantly*]. Are you presuming to suggest, Mr.—

HE. Bathurst.

SHE. Bathurst, thank you.

HE. Not at all.

SHE. Are you presuming— Won't you sit down? [*She indicates the sofa, which has its back to the desk.*]

HE. Won't *you?*

SHE. I think I won't, thank you. I like standing. It's supposed to be good for the figure. But won't you? [*She points to the sofa again.*]

HE. I think I'll improve my figure too, if I may.

SHE [*under her breath*]. Bother!

HE. I beg your pardon!

SHE. Nothing. I was just— Bathurst, didn't you say your name was? It's very hot, isn't it?—Have I said that before?

HE. Not just in those words. You expressed a similar idea— Shall I put those letters down for you?

SHE. Oh, no, no, thanks. I—I like holding them.

HE. I was just going to send on Mr. Matheson's letters for him. It's the second post, isn't it? May I— [*He holds out his hand.*]

SHE [*with surprise*]. Oh, are these his letters? So they are! [*She doles them out to him.*] One, two— [*The third is the letter she wants. She drops the others on the floor.*] Oh, how silly of me! [*As he bends down to pick them up, she slips the letter in her bag. But he is too quick for her.*]

HE [*holding out his hand*]. And what about that one?

SHE. Which one?

HE. The one in your bag.

SHE. How quick you are, Mr.—er—

HE. Bathurst.

SHE. Oh, yes, of course.

HE [*holding out his hand again*]. May I have it?

SHE. No. No, you see, this is mine.

HE. Addressed to you?

SHE. Addressed *by* me. I wrote it.

HE [*doubtfully*]. Oh! How do I know?

SHE. Well, I've just told you.

HE. Yes, but—

SHE [*taking the letter out of her bag*]. Oh, my dear man! There! Take that! Now, look at that very carefully with one eye, and watch me very carefully with the other. [*She goes to the desk, takes an envelope and addresses it.*] No deception whatever. No elastic up the sleeve or anything. There! [*She stands up and holds the letter next to his.*] Any resemblance?

HE [*grudgingly*]. Well—

SHE. Don't bother about the thumb-mark on yours, because that's the postman's.

HE. Well, of course—I suppose if you say you did—

SHE [*whisking the letter away from him*]. Oh, my dear man, did you think I'd come to steal the postal orders? Well, I must be off. You wouldn't like to give me something to drink first? All this sort of thing is terribly exhausting, as you remarked a little while ago.

HE. Of course. [*Going to the table.*] Cider cup?

SHE [*going to the sofa*]. Beautiful. [*She sits down and he brings her a glass.*] Thank you. I'll give you a toast. [*She raises her glass and he raises his.*] The Head Female Searcher at Scotland Yard! [*She laughs gaily and drinks; he drinks rather uncomfortably.*]

HE. Yes, but all the same there's a bit more to it than that.

SHE. Yes, there is. [*Firmly.*] What are *you* doing here, my man? This is Mr. Matheson's cottage, and you say your name is Bathurst. That's very suspicious.

HE. I have taken the cottage furnished.

SHE. Oh! Oh, well, of course— But Mr. Matheson ought to have come back today.

HE. He suddenly changed his mind. He came down this morning for some more clothes, and went off again. I rather wanted to stay on, and— Here I am.

SHE. Here *we* are. [*She drinks to him.*]

HE. Exactly. And I'm sorry to seem to harp on the subject, but when once a letter has gone through the post, it isn't the property of the writer any longer.

SHE. Oh, I'm sure that's wrong.

HE. It's the law, I believe.

SHE. You must have got it the wrong way round.

HE. I don't think so.

SHE [*winningly*]. Try thinking so. [*She pats the sofa encouragingly.*]

HE [*shaking his head*]. No, really. [*But he sits next to her.*]

SHE. You aren't a judge or a policeman or a clergyman or anything strict, are you?

HE. As a matter of fact, I'm an architect.

SHE. Oh, well, they're *never* very strict. When they say it will be three thousand, it's always four.

HE [*smiling and shaking his head*]. It's no good.

SHE. It wouldn't help if I ordered a couple of houses? Hot *and* cold?

HE. I'm afraid not.

SHE. Oh! [*Earnestly.*] If I told you that I wrote this letter on a mad impulse, and that I now regret the impulse, and want to save Mr. Matheson the great pain of reading it, what would you say? [*She leans towards him.*] What would you say?

HE [*suddenly*]. I'd say "I don't know if it's true, and I don't care if it's true; keep the letter if it would make *you* happier."

SHE [*leaning back triumphantly*]. Ah! . . . [*Gently.*] Thank you. . . . It *is* true, you know.

HE. That's all right. Don't bother about it any more. [*Getting up.*] Have some more cider-cup, won't you?

SHE [*giving him her glass*]. No, thank you. [*He puts it down.*] Have you ever had mumps?

HE. Had what?

SHE [*blowing out her cheeks*]. Mumps.

HE. As a child, I suppose. Why?

SHE. Oh, nothing. [*After a pause*]. It *was* true, you know. About that letter. I was running away.

HE. From—him?

SHE. Yes. We were engaged—almost married, you might say—banns called—invitations sent out—presents pouring in—meeting each other's aunts—*you* know. Well—anyone could run away from a husband, but it takes some pluck to run away from that sort of thing.

HE. By Jove, it does!

SHE. It had been a longish engagement, and—of course it was bad of me, but—we'd always been fond of each other—in a sort of way, and—well, there it was.

HE. Er—*where* was it exactly? I mean which one was this?

SHE. Not Mr. Matheson. The other one. He asked me to run away from it all and marry *him* at a registry office. I said I must tell *him*.

HE. All these hims— Is that Matheson? The second one?

SHE. Of course. I must tell him first. He said, No. Write to him. Write to him so as he gets it in the afternoon, and we'll be married in the morning. I said I would. That was this morning . . .

HE. This morning, yes.

SHE. I went to the registry office to meet him—this morning. I'd written to George—

HE. Mr. Matheson?

SHE. Yes. Down here. He hadn't been using his cottage lately, but he'd told me he was coming down today. So I wrote last night—it would get here second post—and I went

to the registry office—rather excited, you know, and wondering if I was being a perfect fool, and all that.

HE. I know.

SHE [*opening her bag*]. Well, I got there, and what do you think I found?

HE. The other man.

SHE. I found this. [*She takes a telegram from her bag, and gives it to him.*]

HE. Am I to read it?

SHE. Please.

HE [*reading*]. "Have mumps. Writing. Henry."

SHE. Have mumps. Writing. Henry.

HE. Well?

SHE [*scornfully*]. Well!

HE. After all, it wasn't *his* fault.

SHE. Well, it wasn't mine.

HE. No, but I mean—

SHE. Mumps!

HE. Of course, one doesn't look one's best—but you needn't have seen him while he—I mean—

SHE. I never want to see him again.

HE. Oh, come, that's hardly fair, is it?

SHE. I don't mind his *having* them; anybody might *have* them. But to—to *time* them so badly.

HE. Well, I must say I'm rather sorry for him.

SHE. Of course you men always hang together. You're all alike.

HE [*indignantly*]. We're nothing of the sort. I should never dream of having mumps on my wedding day. I'm not that sort of man at all.

SHE [*gently*]. Aren't you?

HE. Of course not. All I meant was that I was sorry for Henry because he has lost you. Anyone would be sorry for him. A man with a great big face—and a broken heart—

SHE. His heart isn't broken.

HE. Why not? Mine would be.

SHE. Ah, yours! But you're different!

HE. That's what I keep saying. Different, but to a certain extent sympathetic with him in his great loss.

SHE. Wait! You haven't heard the worst. As soon as I read that telegram, I—well, what could I do? I was staggered. I said [*huskily*] "Thank you, thank you," and went home all dazed. And when I got in, the first thing I saw was another telegram. Imagine how eagerly I tore it open! [*Giving it to him.*] Here it is.

HE. Am I to read it?

SHE. Please.

HE [*reading*]. "Have mumps. Writing. Henry."

SHE. Have mumps. Writing. Henry.

HE. The same mumps?

SHE. The same mumps.

HE. Well?

SHE [*scornfully*]. Well!

HE [*thoughtfully*]. Of course, I see what you mean.

SHE [*waving at the telegrams*]. Look at them! "Have mumps. Writing. Henry." "Have mumps. Writing. Henry." Doesn't that show you the sort of man he is?

HE [*nodding*]. Methodical.

SHE [*bitterly*]. He's probably telegraphed to all his relations in just the same words. All over the country telegrams are being delivered—"Have mumps. Writing. Henry." All the managers of all the hotels we were to stay at on our honeymoon—

HE [*doubtfully*]. Would he be Henry to them?

SHE. You would have thought that he would have taken the trouble in the second telegram to put it a little differently. "Sorry have mumps"—or "Sudden bad attack of mumps"—or even "*Having* mumps." But a man who can sit down to write two telegrams exactly the same—

HE [*doing his best for* HENRY]. He was lying down, poor chap.

SHE. Well, one can't marry *that* sort of man.

HE. He isn't an artist, that's all. An artist is always feeling for the perfect way of expressing himself, and never finding

it. Henry, not being an artist, found it at once, and stuck to it. "Have mumps. Writing. Henry." It expressed all that he had to express. The vague dissatisfaction which the artist always feels never came to Henry. I mean—not in that way . . .

SHE. You know, *you're* rather interesting.

HE [*pleased*]. Am I?

SHE. That's quite right about being an artist. [*Nodding to herself.*] That's what's the matter with *me*.

HE. How?

SHE. I'm always looking—and never quite finding.

HE. First, George; then, Henry?

SHE. Yes. At least, when we say "*First*, George—"

HE. Exactly.

SHE. Yes. [*She sighs.*] Yes. [*Brightly.*] Now where was I? Oh, yes, that second telegram. Have mumps. Writing. Henry. That maddened me—being the same as the other. I telegraphed back "How funny. So have I. Bettine." And dashed down here.

HE [*to himself*]. Bettine!

SHE. You see, I knew I couldn't marry George. George didn't express me properly. I couldn't say what I wanted to say with George—do you know George well?

HE. I know his solicitors better.

SHE. I think one does.

HE. Now what do you mean by that?

SHE. Only that sometimes when you're talking to George, you feel that you are talking to his solicitors. What I call the "My dear child" manner. "My dear child, leave this to *me*." I oughtn't to be talking like this to you in George's house, ought I?

HE [*sitting next to her again, and whispering in her ear*]. No!

SHE. Particularly to you who are so very strict.

HE [*indignantly*]. I'm not strict!

SHE. But I wanted you to understand. So, you see, having written to George to say that I was running away with another young man, and then finding he was having mumps instead, I

dashed down here to get the letter back. Because it will hurt George less if he feels that I just don't love him enough, than if I told him there was a Henry.

HE. Bettine. . . . And I know I've heard that name—

SHE. It's a pretty name, isn't it?

HE. Bettine Conway—of course! [*He jumps up.*]

SHE. That's me!

HE. Yes, I posted a letter to you— [*Slapping his pocket.*] Good Lord. No, I didn't.

SHE. What sort of a letter?

HE. This morning—I wanted to go into the village—Matheson gave me a lift on his way back to London—asked me to post a letter for him—[*he is feeling in his pockets*] here you are. Good Lord, I might have forgotten it for ever.

SHE [*primly*]. This one *hasn't* passed through the post yet?

HE. No.

SHE. So that it still belongs to Mr. Matheson. That is the law, I believe?

HE. I really don't know. It can't matter much.

SHE. I'm very strict in these affairs. [*And suddenly she whisks it away from him.*] Who keeps the stamp?

HE. You keep the letter, and give *me* the stamp. That's fair.

SHE. Very well. [*She opens the letter and gives him the envelope.*] You can use it for your next letter to his solicitors. [*She reads.*] Oh! [*He is looking the other way, the perfect gentleman. She says more loudly.*] Oh!! [*He still takes no notice. She turns to him.*] Oh!!! [*Now he has to say something.*]

HE [*awkwardly*]. I say, I hope—

SHE. Some more of that cider-cup—quickly. [*He goes for it.*] Well, really!

HE [*bringing back one for her and one for himself*]. Here you are.

SHE. I'll give you another toast. [*She raises her glass.*] Henrietta!

HE. Henrietta—whoever she may be.

SHE. He doesn't mention her name, but she corresponds to my Henry.

HE. Good Lord, you don't mean—

SHE. I'm jilted. Yes. They were married this morning.

HE [*hopefully*]. Perhaps *she* got mumps too.

SHE. Nobody that mattered could get mumps on George's wedding day. He arranges his life too well for that. "My dear child, leave it to *me*." She left them to him.

HE. I say, what a beastly cad! I've a jolly good mind not to pay his rent this week.

SHE [*violently to herself*]. If only he'd got my letter first! [*Appealingly.*] I did jilt him first, didn't I? You're a witness.

HE. You did. I swear! I'd swear it before a solicitor.

SHE. Couldn't we draw up a statement—

HE. Couldn't we just send that letter on to him?

SHE. Which one?

HE. Yours. If the postmark is clear—

SHE [*looking at him admiringly*]. How brilliant you are! I didn't know that architects were like that. [*She opens her bag and takes out the letter.*] There you are.

HE [*examining it*]. That's all right. It's as clear as anything. Did you date it inside too?

SHE. The day of the week—Wednesday, 10.30 P.M. Just like that.

HE. Good, then we've got him. I'll send it on to him today. He gave me an address—an hotel in Wales.

SHE. How helpful you are. You think of everything.

HE [*smiling modestly, and then suddenly frowning*]. By Jove, I've just thought of *something!*

SHE. What?

HE. Why, you say you're getting married in this. And then he'll come back from his honeymoon, and—

SHE. And I'm not.

HE. No, you're not.

SHE. It's awkward, isn't it? Oh, why didn't I just jilt him without going into particulars about Henry.

HE. Did you go into particulars about Henry? I mean, did you mention his name?

SHE. Not his actual name. But I said I was marrying him at once, and— Couldn't we steam open the letter, and then I could write another and use the old envelope, and—

HE [*quietly*]. I could suggest a better way than that, if I were privileged to advise. [*He comes close to her.*]

SHE. What?

HE. That she should post the letter as it is—

SHE. But—

HE. And then *be* married when he comes back.

SHE [*surprised*]. To Henry?

HE. Good Heavens, no!

SHE. To whom, then?

HE [*sitting next to her*]. To anybody who, having offered himself for the experiment, was lucky enough to be accepted.

SHE. To some old friend, perhaps, whom she knew well?

HE. Well, no. I think that, as an artist, she should avoid the *cliché* and trust rather to the inspiration of the moment.

SHE. But we decided, didn't we, that the artist was never satisfied with his inspiration for—for much more than a moment?

HE. One seeks always for something better, yes; for some more perfect means of expression. It would be up to him of whom we are talking to be always just out of her reach, so that it was always he whom she was seeking.

SHE. Isn't that rather the woman's way?

HE. Hers, too.

SHE [*after a pause*]. Is there such a man?

HE. She could spend a week or two in wondering.

SHE [*nodding*]. All George's honeymoon, in fact.

HE. Yes. . . . It would be amusing if George came down here with Henrietta—

SHE. And found you—

HE. And my wife—

SHE. Just leaving.

HE. Yes. My wife would explain carefully to Henrietta

about the kitchen boiler or the oil stove or some other domestic trifle.

SHE [*smiling*]. I shall love doing that.

HE. No, you won't. You'll be much too happy to love doing that.

SHE. You seem very sure.

HE. I'm not a bit sure really, but I have an idea it would be fun if we were married. Shall we try walking out?

SHE [*after a pause*]. No harm in trying. [*She looks at her watch and gets up.*] I ought to be going, I suppose.

HE. How did you come down? Car?

SHE. Good gracious, no. Third class.

HE. Good, then I'll walk with you to the station. And what about tomorrow. I shall be coming up to London for a week. Could we dine somewhere?

SHE. Easily, I should think. As long as it's cheap, and I pay my share. Soho-ish.

HE. Right. [*He sits down at the desk and re-addresses her letter.*] Just wait a moment. . . . I'm glad that fellow got mumps.

SHE [*sighing happily*]. Yes, wasn't it lucky?

HE [*getting up*]. There! Now, do we send it to George, or don't we?

SHE. It's rather final, isn't it? [*They stand looking at it together.*]

HE. It commits you to a husband; not necessarily to me.

SHE. I've got a sort of idea it will be you or nobody.

HE. Yes, I've got that sort of idea too.

SHE. Well, let's bring it along with us and see how we get on.

HE. Yes, let's. [*She stretches out her hand to it, and each holding one end of the letter, they walk out together.*]

[CURTAIN.]

BOOKS AND ARTICLES HELPFUL IN THE STUDY OF "THE ARTIST"

St. John Adcock: "A. A. Milne," *The Bookman,* Vol. LXIX, pp. 143-146. London, 1925.

Ivor Brown: "Bucks and Blayds," *The New Statesman,* Vol. XVIII, pp. 394-395. London, 1922.

* H. L. Cohen: *One-Act Plays by Modern Authors.* New York, 1921.

* Ashley Dukes: *The Youngest Drama.* Chicago, 1924.

* A. A. Milne: *The Day's Play.* London [1925].

First Plays. London, 1919.

Four Plays. London, 1926.

The Holiday Round. London [1925].

If I May. New York [1921].

Not That It Matters. New York [1920].

Once a Week. London [1925].

Second Plays. London, 1923.

Success. New York [1926].

The Sunny Side. New York [1922].

Three Plays. New York [1922].

"When *I* Was Very Young," *Woman's Home Companion,* Vol. LII, No. 12, pp. 23-24. New York, 1925.

Edward Shanks: "Mr. Milne's 'Success,'" *The Outlook,* Vol. LII, p. 14. London, 1923.

H. Shipp: "Advertisement and the Drama," *English Review,* Vol. XXXVI, pp. 351-354. London, 1923.

* Graham Sutton: *Some Contemporary Dramatists.* New York, 1925.

"Tarn": "'To Have the Honour' at Wyndam's Theatre," *The Spectator,* Vol. CXXXII, pp. 706-707. London, 1924.

* For high school reference.

W. J. Turner: "'The Truth About Blayds' at the Globe Theatre," *The Spectator,* Vol. CXXVII, pp. 891-892. London, 1921.

PLAYS BY A. A. MILNE

1916–1917. *The Red Feathers.**
1916–1917. *The Boy Comes Home.**
1916–1917. *The Lucky One.*
1917. *Wurzel-Flummery.**
1918. *Belinda.*
1918. *Make-Believe.*
1919. *The Camberley Triangle.**
1919. *Mr. Pim Passes By.*
1920. *The Stepmother.**
1920. *The Romantic Age.*
1921. *The Truth About Blayds.*
1922. *The Dover Road.*
1923. *The Great Broxopp.*
1923. *Success.*
1924. *To Have the Honour.*
1925. *Ariadne.*
1925. *Portrait of a Gentleman in Slippers.**

* One act.

GOOD THEATRE[1]

By

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY

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INTRODUCTION

GOOD THEATRE

Good Theatre relates how Shakespeare and Bacon revisit the earth on Allhallows Eve. They attempt to gain admission to the hit of the year, entitled, without rhyme or reason, *Your Money or Your Wife*. The house is sold out, so they cannot penetrate to the auditorium, but the dialogue of Morley's play makes it plain that *Your Money or Your Wife* is, in most respects, a twentieth-century jazz version of *As You Like It*. *Good Theatre* is thus a dramatic rendering of Christopher Morley's views on the "Broadway show," which relies for its success on a time-tested formula and which dresses up that formula in the particular brand of "hokum" most popular at the moment. He might have aired these views in an essay, but he chose, as a vehicle for his satire, this one-act play. There are other targets, too, in *Good Theatre:* zealous Baconians—1926 is the three hundredth anniversary of "Frank's" death—as well as the "king can do no wrong" school of Shakespearian critics, suffer the slings and arrows of Morley's wit. Shakespeare is presented as the practical playwright who achieves his successes by following the lead of popular taste.

As You Like It would appear to be favorite browsing ground for Mr. Morley. *Good Theatre* is his second exploration of the Forest of Arden. *Parsons' Pleasure* (published in 1923), a volume of poems which takes its name from that "green bathing pool on the Cherwell

backwater where even the most confident theologians are happily out of their depth," contains the miniature drama entitled *So This Is Arden.* Jaques, the " Gloomy Gus " of *Your Money or Your Wife,* and Touchstone are the interlocutors in this dramatic fragment, in which Morley diverts himself with improvisations in Jaques's peculiar manner and plays with the stops of Shakespeare's blank verse. So we have Jaques sententiously observing:

> Here is the whole rich world in microcosm—
> Philosophers, retainers, lovers, fools,
> Sylvestered in this twinkling chequered sunlight,
> This flow of nimble air, that sharps the wits
> And makes a man fear nothing, only death.

In this same playlet, Touchstone, introduced by Jaques to the pleasures of the exiled Duke's table (Celia's fare having proved unsubstantial), resents in Morley's own humorous idiom, though, nevertheless, characteristically, the lyrical interruptions to trencher work:

> Please God, my lord of Amiens will not sing until the meal be dispatched. It is weary work to suspend chewing until these melancholy glees be wailed. To interrupt manly victual with a mere madrigal!

So This Is Arden is really helpful in the critical interpretation of the characters of Shakespeare's *As You Like It.*

Your Money or Your Wife, the play within the play, in Morley's *Good Theatre,* as mirrored by the posters that advertise it and the chatter of lobby attendants, reproduces amusingly the age-long elements of popularity in *As You Like It.* As Skeat, the great English scholar, once wrote: " Stories which relate the fate of a younger

brother who is deprived of his inheritance by the jealousy of a senior brother, and who nevertheless achieves great prosperity, are as old as the time of Joseph." Shakespeare seems to have been a practical playwright. In writing *As You Like It,* he did little more than dramatize a popular pastoral novel, Thomas Lodge's *Rosalynde, or Euphues' Golden Legacy* (1590). The dramatization of pastoral narrative was one of the most profitable stage expedients of the day. *As You Like It* is generally believed to have been produced about 1599-1600. Two rival companies of players were busy in London in that year, the Chamberlain's men and the Admiral's men. When the latter made a hit with *Robin Hood,* " a representation of forest life," their rivals took advantage of the vogue by putting on *As You Like It.*

That the resort to fantasy was congenial to Shakespeare at this stage of his development can hardly be doubted. The Forest of Arden and the kingdom of Illyria, these were refuges, asylums, sanctuaries, in which life-easing dreams might take shape. The poets and playwrights who spend their creative energy in fantasy repay study. Their behavior helps us better to understand ourselves. Intolerable circumstance or the tears of things may set any one of us to straying through the bypaths of imagined coverts.

The reference to the Gloomy Gus of *Your Money or Your Wife,* a character " full o' the heebejeebies," the " one grand wise-cracker," taken in connection with Jaques's resurrection in *So This Is Arden,* shows Morley's appreciation of the theatrical availability of this type. " In ' the melancholy Jaques,' " as Joseph Quincy Adams has phrased it, " with his humorous philosophizing on life and his studied pose as a malcontent, we have a new type that in favor with theatre-goers shared honor even with

Rosalind and Touchstone. Marston, realizing its effectiveness, at once developed the type in his play entitled *The Malcontent* (1600); and from now on the 'cynical railer' enjoyed something like a vogue on the stage." Beyond England, too, the character Jaques has become a special center of interest, more striking indeed in his appeal than Rosalind; so much so that when George Sand converted *As You Like It* to the uses of the French stage she made Jaques the moving force of the whole drama.

Morley's special scrutiny of the plays *As You Like It* and *The Tempest*—he has done another miniature drama working out some of the ideas implicit in this romance of Shakespeare's maturity—does give us some insight into the character of that Christopher Morley now established in "Green Escape," his Long Island home, now settled with his family in a remote village in Normandy, now travelling farther afield in Europe. He has never written a formal autobiography, yet his essays and his fiction, like his taste in Shakespearian plays, are found to be singularly self-revealing. There is, for example, convincing unity of attitude in these three passages: The first, occurring in his *A Preface to the Profession of Journalism,* states simply: "Close, constant, vivid, and compassionate gazing at the ways of mankind is the laboratory manual of literature." The second passage, found in a similar context, in his *Religio Journalistici* gives the foregoing statement a personal application: "No work of art or literature yet, so far as I know, has given an adequate presentment of the glory and agony and mirth and excitement of being alive."

The third scrap of evidence, from *Shakespeare in Stratford Church,* a poem in *Parsons' Pleasure,* is a mere variation of the theme on which Morley's life seems to supply the variations:

What a man believes
Or, likelier, believes that he believes,
Is nothing—nay, 'tis something, if it be
But nice politeness to the tenderhood
Of honest worthy folk.

Put more jocosely, there is the same idea in the concluding lines of *On a Portrait of Dr. Samuel Johnson, LL.D.* (by Sir J. Reynolds, now owned by A. E.[dward] N.[ewton]):

If life brought Dr. Johnson to his knees
It may bring others also, if you please—
Bachelors of Arts . . .
And LL.D.'s.

To multiply passages like these is to body forth the essential Christopher Morley far more accurately than by means of a recital of the external facts of his life, though these, too, are unusually interesting. He was born in 1890 in Haverford, Pennsylvania, of English Quaker parents. His father taught mathematics in the college and, at the end of Christopher's first decade, was called to be Professor of Pure Mathematics at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. After school days in that vicinity, Christopher Morley returned to Haverford as a student, graduating in 1910. He went, then, as Rhodes Scholar from Maryland to New College, Oxford. "No writer," he confesses, "has ever attempted to analyze the shimmering tissue of inchoate excitement and foreboding that fills the spirit of the juvenile Rhodes Scholar as he first enters his Oxford College. He arrives with his mind a gentle confusion of hearsay about Walter Pater, Shelley, boat races, Mr. Gladstone, Tom Brown, the Scholar Gipsy, and Little Mr. Bouncer." While at

Haverford, Morley had, from time to time, contributed to *The Haverfordian.* During his Oxford days he published *The Eighth Sin,* a booklet of verse containing many attractive examples of the use of French fixed verse forms in English, in which he has never lost interest.

> But most of all my soul regrets
> My still unwritten triolets.

During his vacation periods at Oxford Morley made many of the Old World excursions which he was later to turn to such excellent literary account. He renewed, also, the precious literary ties with the land of his forefathers, ties which he had formed during the several summer holidays spent in England during his boyhood.

Of the influence on him of his *Almæ Matres* Morley has written in these oft-quoted lines:

> Two breeding-places I have known
> Where germinal my heart was sown;
> Two places from which I inherit
> The present business of my spirit:
> Haverford, Oxford, quietly
> May make a poet out of me.

Morley, coming back to his American home in 1913, continued his literary career by serving in an editorial and advisory capacity in the great publishing house Doubleday, Page & Company, at Garden City, New York. His employers enjoyed his enthusiasms, his admiration, in especial, for William McFee and Joseph Conrad. Morley's love of the sea, of ships, and of seafaring life is of a piece with the turn that his imagination takes when it seeks out the quiet green places of the landsman's earth. Since his connection with the editorial

affairs of the Garden City publishing house was terminated in 1917, Morley has been on the board of the *Ladies' Home Journal* and has conducted columns for the *Philadelphia Evening Public Ledger,* for the *New York Evening Post,* and, latterly, for *The Saturday Review of Literature.*

Apropos of his entrance into this field we have his extravagant account of the advertisement of his qualifications which he was half minded to insert in its proper place:

"Humorist"

Young and untamed, lineal descendant of Eugene Field, Frank Stockton, and François Rabelais, desires to run a column in a Philadelphia newspaper. A guaranteed circulation-getter.

Said Humorist can also supply excellent veins of philosophy, poetry, satire, uplift, glad material, and indiscriminate musings. Remarkable opportunity for any newspaper desiring a really unusual editorial feature. Address Humorist, etc.

This tidbit is taken from *Christopher Morley by Himself* which appeared in *The Colyumist's Confessional,* printed in 1920 in *Everybody's Magazine.* The following comes from the same source:

The more a colyumist is out on the streets, making himself the reporter of the moods and oddities of men, the better his stuff will be. It seems to me that his job ought to be good training for a novelist, as it teaches him a habit of human sensitiveness.

A beginner in letters does well to study Christopher Morley's approach to his work. His family, his friends, his dogs, his travels, his chance encounters in life and

literature, as well as his steady, lambent enthusiasms, are the chemical elements of his literary composition. In particular, his familiar essays, like Lamb's and Stevenson's, are intensely personal. His affinity for this form, it is obvious, is due to his charmingly fervent humanity. Christopher Morley has the notebook habit—he recommends it to young writers—and in his casual, but not random, jottings are to be discovered the germinal ideas of his verse and prose.

His strongest literary sympathies are significant. R. L. S. has always held for him a singular fascination. At Haverford, Stevenson was the subject of his bachelor's thesis. Morley, in his essays *The Autogenesis of a Poet* and *17 Herriot Row* (both in *Safety Pins and Other Essays*), has tried to express the quality of his understanding of Stevenson. In the first of these papers he has written: "My paramount interest has always been literary, though regarded as a gentle diversion, not degraded to a bread-and-butter concern. Ever since I had fallen under the superlative spell of R. L. S., in whom the cunning enchantment of the written word first became manifest, I have understood that books did not grow painlessly for our amusement, but were the issue of dexterous and intentional skill."

The seventeenth century has had a palpable influence on the author of *Good Theatre*, his thought and style. Hobbes's *Leviathan* is often singled out for mention; Robert Herrick, Thomas Browne, and George Herbert are frequently invoked. In the eighteenth century, Samuel Johnson, with his enormous gusto for life, captures and holds Morley. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Charles Lamb, George Borrow, James Matthew Barrie, Logan Pearsall Smith, and George Santayana,

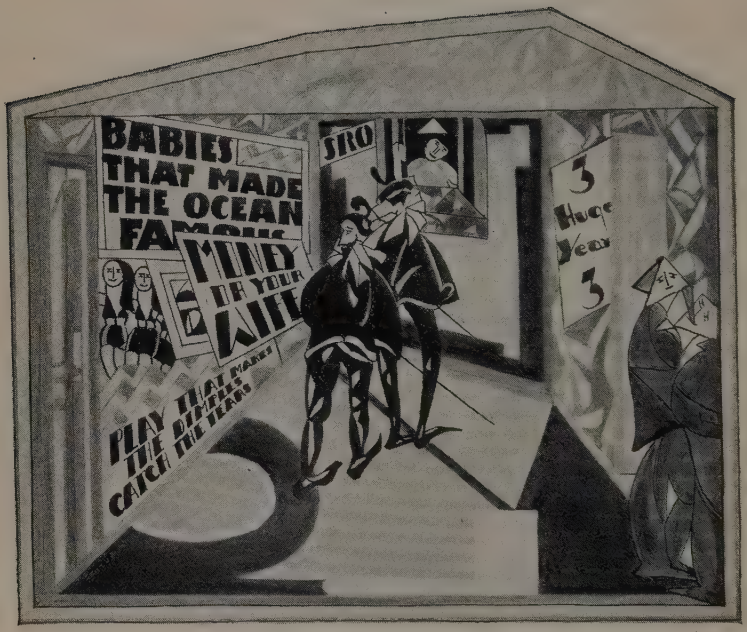
disparate figures, become, in turn, according to his mood and temper, paramount in his mind.

No account of Morley and his attempts "to probe those disturbances and ecstasies that engender literature" can afford to omit mention of his repeatedly rendered homage to Walt Whitman. To cite only a few of the documents, there are, in Morley's *Travels in Philadelphia,* the *feuilletons* on *Anne Gilchrist's House* and *The Whitman Centennial.* In Morley's *One Act Plays* is included that touching and effective biographical drama, *Walt,* and most recently has been published the Morley edition of Whitman's *Two Prefaces.*

Possibly the key to Morley's life lies in the evident circumstance that, unlike poor Bobby Burns, his existence is miraculously animated by a single purpose. To him there is no separation between writing and living. Both are functions of the spirit; both are part of the quest—undertaken in high good humor and with the utmost humility!—for Understanding and Beauty. There is, then, nothing so surprising in Christopher Morley's periodic visits to literature classes in the high schools of the city of New York or in the hours that he spends in pleasant and kindling conference with the teachers of those classes. To a man of Christopher Morley's temperament such occupations are not distracting; such hours are an integral part of his obligations, as he conceives them, to life and literature.

CHARACTERS

The Girl in the Box-office.
First Dinner Jacket.
Second Dinner Jacket.
Two Strangers.
Customers in the lobby, and members of the audience.



Good Theatre: the lobby of a New York theatre. The satirical nature of Christopher Morley's piece is suggested by this humorous, post-impressionistic setting, its distortions symbolizing the ironical tone of the play.

GOOD THEATRE

The scene is the lobby of a New York theatre while a play is in performance within. At the back, center, the window of the box-office. Right, at a 45-degree angle, the entrance to the auditorium. The left wall, also a 45-degree slant, is almost concealed by huge posters of the play, pictures of girls in one-piece bathing suits, large photographs of actors, and such announcements as YOUR MONEY OR YOUR WIFE, THIRD HUGE YEAR, THE PLAY THAT MAKES DIMPLES TO CATCH THE TEARS. SEE THE BATHING CHORUS, THE BABIES THAT MADE THE OCEAN FAMOUS. *Down left, entrance from street.*

The director will note that this piece requires a considerable number of back-stage voices carefully drilled to emit, at given moments, the sound of a large audience screeching with laughter. This laughter must have a specially proletarian timbre; it is predominantly feminine and subtly suggests the vulgar horseplay of the play proceeding within. It is always a sudden unanimous explosion, followed by scattered almost hysterical screams of female merriment. The director will see to it, by giving his signals at the proper instant, that this back-stage laughter does not interfere with any possible laughter in the actual audience.

The box-office window is arranged so that the audience can get a clear view of the sprightly young woman in charge of the tickets. At the entrance to the theatre proper, R., are two dark and dapper little men in dinner jackets and velvet hats, very Hart, Schaffner and Marx in aspect, guardians of the doorway; they are almost twinlike in similarity though one is older than the other. Five or six young men and girls are standing, L., looking at the

posters. Their clothes and umbrellas show that it is raining outside.

Immediately after the rise of the curtain there is a terrific and multitudinous yell of laughter from behind the scene. The young people studying the posters look at each other and then move over to the box-office window, where they go through the motions of inquiring for tickets. Two or three other people also come in from the street, shake off rain, and go to the box-office.

GIRL IN BOX-OFFICE [*to these inquirers successively*]. All sold out for the next three weeks. All sold out. [*Another loud halloo behind.*] I can give you two in the peanut for a week from Monday. Sometimes there's something turned in just before the show. Sorry, sister, there ain't a thing. Not a chance. Positively S.R.O. [*A supreme explosion of laughter inside, followed by single squawks and yelps. The loiterers in the lobby go out reluctantly.*]

FIRST DINNER JACKET. That's where she loses her bathin' suit. [*He looks at his watch.*] Ten-thirty-two. Runnin' right on schedule tonight. We'll let out by eleven-five.

SECOND D. J. Does everything always come right on time like that?

FIRST D. J. Sure. You can set your watch by the laughs. You'll learn a lot about the show business when you go on the road with that new company. Hoboken to Tallahassee, they'll all yell at the same thing. The next one comes at ten-thirty-three when she uses that hank of seaweed for a skirt. They'll laugh for twelve seconds. Time it for yourself. [*He holds out his watch for the younger man to see. A howl of laughter from behind, diminishing and then renewing, lasting exactly twelve seconds. If possible there should be among the back-stage voices one that can produce a specially loud, braying and grotesque masculine yawp, recognizable now and then above the others.*]

SECOND D. J. Pretty good. Not even this storm tonight ain't hurt none.

First D. J. Takes more'n weather to pull this show's punch. Startin' on third year and took twenty-four thousand last week. Some draw, I'll tell the world. With this piece Monday's near as good as Saturday, and any showman'll tell you that's a miracle. [*Another uproar behind.*]

Second D. J. I thought it bein' Hallowe'en might cut into business, so many parties on tonight.

[*During this conversation two men in Elizabethan costume have entered from the street, shaking raindrops from their cloaks and plumed hats, and look about them curiously. They examine the posters, confer together, suggest in dumb show that there is something about these that they do not understand, and go to the box-office window. Meanwhile continued explosions of laughter from behind make them look oddly at one another. The two Dinner Jackets, talking together, half turned toward offstage, as though looking into the house, do not notice these visitors until, a moment later, the voice of the girl at the box-office catches their attention.*

The two visitors, whom we will identify merely as W and F, are very different in demeanor. W, of medium stature, inclined to plumpness, has a high forehead, prematurely baldish, auburn hair, bright hazel eyes, a small moustache, and a very tiny beard on his lower lip. He is of mercurial, sensitive, excitable disposition. The other, F, is more controlled; taller and thinner, with dark eyes and the arched brows of a humorist. His handsome face is shrewd, observant, cynical, a trifle sombre; he has a drooping moustache and a neat beard.]

Second D. J. [*timing another laugh*]. Six seconds for that one.

First D. J. Yeh. That's where she skids on the jellyfish. At matinées that on'y gets four seconds. They always laughs longer at night. Nothing on their minds, I guess. Kids in bed and dishwashing all done for the day.

Second D. J. That's the only trouble by this show. So

much time out for laughs, always I miss the 11.25 for Cypress Hills.

First D. J. Don't be sore on them laughs, brother. Every one o' them screams is a meal ticket. That's what I call good theayter.

Girl [*loudly*]. Not a darn thing. What's the use you boys coming round here in fancy dress an' tryin' to kid me.

W [*to F*]. Who is the saucy knave to use us thus? There was a varlet once at the barrier of the Globe spoke me just so. I draggled him in Bankside.

First D. J. [*turning*]. Coupla birds from that fancy dress ball at the Astor.

Girl. No, you can't go in without seats. Standing Room's full up. Besides, the show's most over, they're in the last act.

W. I'll not stomach it.

Girl. Don't try to start nothin' round here. Run back to the costumer's and put on your pants.

W. Godamercy, to be groundlinged thus. Ho, young capon, forth and be carved. [*Makes as if to draw his rapier.*]

F [*restraining him*]. Tush, Will, tush. No offence was meant. Besides it is no fire-eater. Seest thou not, 'tis but a wench?

W. Go to! A wench in the theatre? [*Looks at her closely.*] Zounds, 'tis even so. Nay then, considered as wench she is not ill favored, though uncouth in the poll. [*He refers, need we explain, to her close-cropped hair.*]

Girl. You boys better get home to New Haven and sleep it off.

W. Nay, duckling, spite me not. What manner of play is this? [*Laughter behind.*] It reapeth public favor?

Girl. It's a knockout. Mean to say you ain't heard of it?

F. But is it play indeed, play absolute? Once this evening we were shrewdly gulled with accelerated portraits—

Girl. Come again, Webster. I don't get you.

W. Instead of proper playhouse life and doings
On a whited arras we saw passage
Of wild phantasmas and distracted shades

With trivial texts between. Inexplicable dumb-show! A murrain on such cozenage!

GIRL. Oh, sure, it's a real stage play, not a pitcher.—Better stick around. I might find you two good seats, about a month from now.

W. Gramercy; this is our only night. We saw your fiery blazons overhead. *Your Money or Your Wife*—the title's merry.

F. The alternative is justly choosed. The more wiving, the less in pocket.

GIRL. Yeh, it's a nifty. Gets 'em coming. It ain't nothing to do with the show. Just a line.

W. But what meaneth this bombast touching tears and dimples?

F. A form of hyperbole, I trow; inclining men's minds to credit that the piece assuageth dolor with concurrent risibles, moving simultaneously to grief and merriment. [*Another yell of laughter inside.*]

W. Merriment indeed. Lord, Frank, they whooped it just so at the old Globe. I know that voice of the groundlings. I'll warrant some zany hath fallen on his rump.

GIRL. It's a good guess.

W. And your choirboys yonder. [*He points to poster of the bathing beauties.*] A cunning trick of padding. They counterfeit damsels right briskly. 'Tis good for business.

GIRL. *Boys!* Say, what do you think this is? The Columbia varsity show?—Mr. Einstein! Let these guys breathe on *your* neck. I'm busy.

F. The wench is something choleric. Accost the little gemini in sable. [*They make a courteous bow to the two Dinner Jackets.*]

W. Gentles, Godigoden [*which is correct Elizabethan for "God give you good even"*].

FIRST D. J. You *can't* get in. Sorry, gents, full house.

W. A brave night for the author.

F. What have we here; something comical-tragical-historical-pastoral? [*Another shout of laughter inside.*]

First D. J. It don't sound tragical-historical, does it? Come on, boys, what's the big idea? You from that party at the Astor?

W. Gossip, we come from far; our inquest's honest.

First D. J. Inquest! No one dead around here.

W. When I was at the Globe—

First D. J. The Globe? Oh, friends of Charley Dillingham, maybe. Say, are you professionals? Why didn't you flash a card—

W. We had a hope to learn what new progressions, what simulations and what pretty arts the playhouse stages now. Tell us the course and color of your drama.

First D. J. Sure, it's a pleasure. Greatest wallop Broadway ever had. It's got everything, sure-fire. Comedy, music, dancing—

F. Dancing to song, if sweetly devised, is a thing of great pleasure. It hath an extreme good grace, and maketh sport for the vulgar.

First D. J. You said it. Boy, wait till you see that chorus. Well, it's like this. There's an ornery old bird living on Long Island that's kinda gypped his brother outa the family property; they had a run-in, and the brother went off to Florida, years ago, when it was all just a sand beach.

W. Florida?

F. A kind of plantation, perchance—

First D. J. Oh, filling stations and scenery and one-piece bathing suits. Where folks lay around on the sand and wait for the newspapers to take their picture.

W. A Forest of Arden— [*He is listening with closest attention.*]

First D. J. So the brother beats it off down there in the sunshine. He gets together a kind of Boy Scout Troop, a bunch of his old buddies that's all cuckoo for the simple life. They camp out in the jungle and sing barber-shop harmony and swear it beats Times Square all hollow. And there's a Gloomy Gus along who pulls a swell line of philosophy. He's

full o' the heebejeebies, but he's one grand wise-cracker. [*Loud laughter behind.*] There, that's him now.

F [*to* W]. Nay, there is strange infusion in this discourse. I make but doubtful seizure of his drift.

W [*nudges him*]. Soft, soft! This is of notable purport. [*"Purport," in Elizabethan usage, is accented on the second syllable. To* D. J.] But the wenches, man! Sure your author hath not fobbed you off with a mere parcel of—[*he hesitates for the word*] wise-crackers—moralizing in the greenwood? What is a play without wenches?

First D. J. You should worry. This is Broadway, ain't it? Sure, I'm coming to that. There's a coupla lovely girls, they get fed up living with the rich guy and they run away to Florida too.

W. Ha! Habited as boys?

First D. J. How'd you know? Yeh, it's a fack, though it don't really make much difference; they're all dressed like boys nowadays. And there's a young feller, a mechanic that works in a garridge, who's fell terrible hard for Rosie—that's one of the girls. He's crazy about her, just worships her, and the poor bimbo can't do nothing but blow up her tires and fill her batt'ry with acid—

F. The scoundrel!

First D. J. Oh, no, just this what they call love at first sight. The girl likes him too. He's a big athaletic kid and she's seen him do his stuff at a boxing bout they put on for charity. You know how these classy dames falls for that sorta thing.

W. And your lovesick mechanical follows to the Forest of—to Florida?

First D. J. You betcha. He opens up a hot-dog stand and names it for her, calls it Pretty Rosie's Dog Parlor. He does a big sideline in cold cream, too.

F. Hot dogs, cold cream, a strange antipathy. What is't, a kennel or a dairy?

First D. J. Cold cream for sunburn. Most of those dames down there gets themselves sunburned right up to the horizon.

Well, the kid's clever; on trees along the road he hangs signs *Get Your Dogs at Pretty Rosie's,* and *For Sunburned Legs Come to Pretty Rosie's.* When she sees these signs everywhere she thinks it's a queer coincidence.

F. 'Tis ever the weakness of playwrights. They are not content till plodding probability leapeth like a flea.

S. This—this dame you mention—she seeks him out, undaunted by his kennel of wild hounds?

First D. J. At first he don't reckonize her in her pants, and she pulls his leg something fierce; it's a riot. Then of course the chorus comes on, the whole gang goes in swimming, and say, there's some slick love-making— [*Laughter behind.*] That's what they're doing now. ([*He looks off, as if into the theatre.* W *approaches the doorway and looks off also, vastly interested.*]

F. For the stage, love is matter of comedies; but in life it doth much mischief.

First D. J. [*turning to* F]. Say, your friend's a good showman. He talks like balloon soup, but he knows good theayter.

F. Aye, he hath a practitioner's eye for a love scene.

First D. J. I think he's kidding me. He's seen this show before.

F. 'Tis possible—

W [*from doorway, exulting*]. Lord, Frank— Our darling fustian!— Aye, the very thing! [*Continues to gaze entranced, while a great shout of laughter comes from behind.*]

First D. J. [*to* F]. Then the real estate boom hits 'em, the old wise-crackers is so busy laying out waterfront lots on mortgage they has no time to picnic in the woods; land values goes to the sky and even Gloomy Gus starts a development. The old fourflusher on Long Island loses his jack in Wall Street an' has to come down to borrow from his brother and say he never meant it. They get him a job as a bellhop at Coral Gables. Just a grand hokum fadeout, and everybody happy. [*Laughter within.* W *comes back from doorway, radiant.*]

W. Ah, Frank, thou shouldst write plays.

F. Tush, these are but toys.

W. To hear the groundlings roar as they do now,
Oh, noble sport, sport royal!—Thou'rt too nice.
To my gross Bankside wit, 'tis meat and drink
To hear the addled citizens at their mirth—
Their lewd and lackwit innocent noble mirth!

FIRST D. J. Yeh, it's a great show; a great play for the public.

W. I thought so once myself.

FIRST D. J. Would you believe, every critic in town panned it—

F. The intellect of man, then, is not dead.

FIRST D. J. Give 'em what they like, as they like it—

F [*to* W]. As *you* like it— [*Laughter within.*]

W. Nay, Frank, I see thou hast no playhouse heart;
In this my mystery thou art not capable.
Why even this hodge-pudding of poor dross
Brings me my old ecstatics into mind—
How from the moment of first entrance on
To strike them with the sense of some suspension,
Some controverse of passion and desire,
So that without a guess of what's to come
They feel the onward moving, and are thrilled—

FIRST D. J. Sure! You gotta have suspense—

W. To hold all this within the troubled wit
And, ere a line be charactered, to feel
In airy storage in the delicate brain
Your creatures at their doing—
Not trammelled up with heavy circumstance
But actual and free—yea, this is godlike!

FIRST D. J. I've got a kid in Bushwick High, she said exackly the same thing. She's only sixteen but she's took a correspondence course in playwriting. Her mother was trouping in East Lynne before she was born. I think that gave the kid a sorta litry slant. [*Laughter behind.*]

W. That uproar hath the proper vulgar note,
Sweet in the playwright's ear. Your auditors,
Seasoned with mirth and ripe in apprehension.

Then curiously draw your tensions tighter,
Let glamour tease them on.

FIRST D. J. That's right: get 'em laughing, you can do anything with 'em.

F. As Tully hath it, *Haec ego non rideo; non sal sed natura ridetur;* which is to say, meseems these cachinnations are not caused by wit but by mere animal heyday. Thou rememberest, Will, all motives of laughing have been anatomized in three: foreigners, bodily prostrations, and strong cheese; whereof the merriment of the third seems most difficult to construe. Confound not these baubles with thine own heavenly stuff.

W. Then think you that the roister-doister vein
Requires no cunning? E'en your fustian
Must be just so; so filed and peized
To weigh the voice and carriage of the speech,
To throw the cranky jape just on the moment,
Dibble the seedling theme in earthy sconces
And plant it unawares; and get it over
To a stamping, coughing, jostling, stinking pit
Of ragamuffins, grooms, and varletry,
The cut and longtail of the populace—
And still have grace for loftier quiddities
To please the court and gentry—
There's an art,
Lord Chancellor, that statesmen in great place
Might study to their profit.
[*Laughter behind.*]
Mark you, the veriest groundling of the lot
Must see himself, his inward hope or grievance,
Active on the scene. Aye, this it is
That makes our stagy antics quick and sheer:
Lo, on the very instant of their doing
They are transmuted to the blood and stuff
Of every hearer; who admires the image
And hugs it as his own, or fashions it
To suit his private fancy.

First D. J. It's a fack; we have to keep a cop at the stage door to move on the bozos.

W. It is the varsal ego in men's bosoms
That gives 'em stomach, in their loneliness,
To chew and savour this our bright pretence
And take it to themselves.—Haply the author,
Like the matron pelican of adage,
Feeds his unsuspective auditors
From the red artery of his proper breast.

F. Bravo, Will! Almost persuadest thou me! Thou art, what's passing rare in playwrights, nigh as eloquent as thine own creations.

W. My stuff, you say? Fico! A peoplish vein,
With flashes of proud verse,
But farced and strumpeted for greasy groundlings.
Oh, halidom, to think what *these* [*gesturing off*] could do,
New fangles and devices for the scene,
And women—female women—on the board
To play their lovely, elvish, tragic part
And draw the little nerves of tender feeling
So tight, so strange. Lord, Lord, what truths and triumphs
Are promised for the workmen in this craft.
Oh, to be actual of it once again— [*a pause*]
Methinks we still might move a heart or two,
And not o'ergild the fable.

Girl [*coming from box-office; she has her hat on*]. Mr. Einstein, here's the report on tonight's business. Will you OK it, please? [First D. J. *takes the paper and goes into box-office.* W *is looking into the theatre. The girl turns to* F.] Well, old sport, your friend's got quite a line. I been listening in. Gee, he talks like grand op'ra—

Second D. J. That musta been some party they were on tonight.

Girl. Where do you sheiks learn all that new slang—up at college? That's a grand crack about the women, female

women. Say, I'd like to have that bird meet some o' my girl friends.

F. Nothing, I trow, would give him greater solace. 'Tis our misfortune we have a journey to perform.

GIRL. Back to New Haven, I s'pose. Well, there's time for a coupla sundaes before the midnight—

W [*coming from doorway; his eye kindles upon her, and I begin to see myself that she has her charms*]. Ah, sweet chuck; in relenting mood? 'Tis o'erlong since I have seen such brightness in an eye. Frank, these new tires do not so ill become them. [*He indicates her attractive close-fitting little hat.*] A goodly porringer! An we held converse together, duckling, deemst thou not we might find topics of good cheer?

GIRL [*who has quite succumbed to this mode of address*]. I'll say so. What you doin' after the show? Do you Charleston?

SECOND D. J. Hey, I thought you were dated up with me—

W. We might repair to a tavern—

F. Will, our space is short. On the punctual midnight—

GIRL. Frank, you're an old iceberg. Damn the midnight. There's plenty of trains at Grand Central.

W. I had forgot.—'Tis true, we make a journey—[*chaffing her genially*] a journey that permits no baggages. [*Then almost as if to himself.*] The dead shepherd spoke the seasonable line—poor Kit. [*He quotes.*] "That time might cease, and midnight never come."

GIRL. That's the idea.

W [*takes her arm, looks at her quizzically and tenderly*].

Sweetheart, I had a gust for frolic once.
Savor thy passing hours; may they be sweet—

[*She leans toward him, meeting him clearly in the eye; it is even suspicionable that a kiss is toward, while* F *watches in amused tolerance; what the* SECOND D. J. *thinks I don't care, he is only a puppet anyhow; but then, after just enough pause, comes a burst of clapping from within.*]

GIRL. That's the curtain. Cheese it, here they come.

Meet you here in three minutes. [*She runs off, into the auditorium.*]

W [*looking after her*]. And so, good-night. [*A confused sound of movement from behind.* W *and* F *stand a moment uncertainly.*]

F. Come, Will. Here we have no part. We are but cuckoos in the nest—

W. Or those thin shadows on the whited screen. The word is exit. [*As they go toward the exit,* L., *drawing their cloaks about them,* First D. J. *bobs out of the box-office.*]

First D. J. Well, so long, boys; glad to see you any time you're around. [*They make a polite salute, and are gone.*]

[*The advance guard of a typical musical comedy audience comes through the doorway,* R.; *the men lighting cigarettes, women adjusting their wraps. They pause to utter comments, which must be very distinctly said and not hurried.*]

Members of the Audience. A great show. . . . Cert'nly was comical. . . . I thought I'd die laughing. . . . I could see that all over again. . . . How d'you suppose they think up them things? . . . I liked it, it was *different*. . . . It sure was original.

[curtain.]

BOOKS AND ARTICLES HELPFUL IN THE STUDY OF "GOOD THEATRE"

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* For high school reference.

CARVED WOMAN[1]

By

HARTLEY B. ALEXANDER

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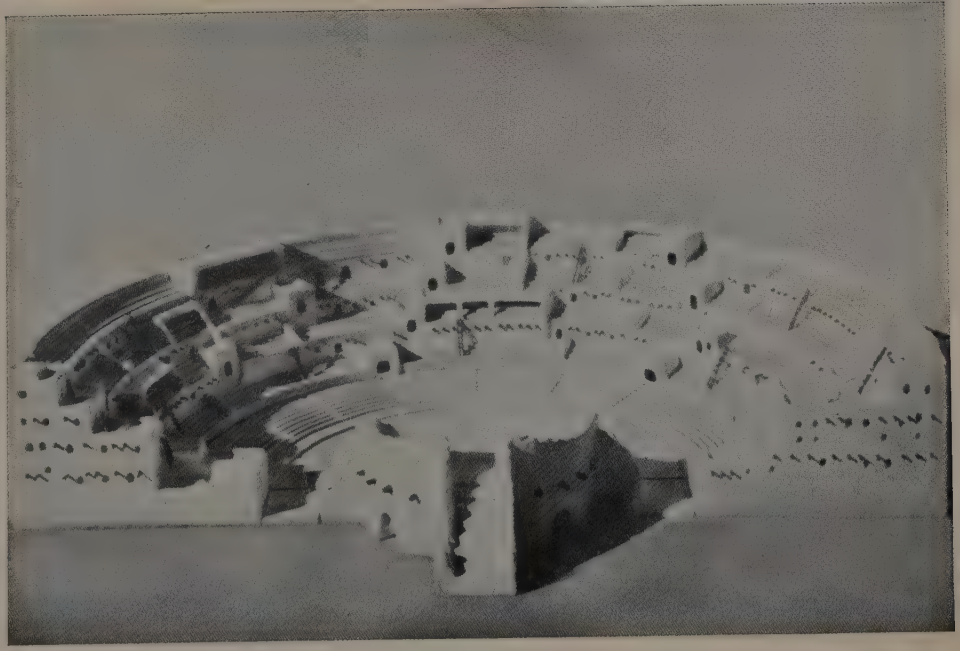


Carved Woman. This model was chosen by Hartley Burr Alexander to illustrate the type of theatre available for the American Indian. It was designed for the School of American Research at Santa Fé, New Mexico. Reprinted by permission from *Theatre Arts Monthly.*

INTRODUCTION

CARVED WOMAN

Interest in more or less primitive cultures is common the world over today. The fetishes of the African negro, antique negro masks, and, in general, the symbolism and pattern of negro weapons and utensils, are engaging the attention of students and practitioners of various arts. Similarly, the architectural achievements, the rituals, the dances, the literature, and the decorative arts of the Indians of South, Central, and North America are proving deeply attractive as vital contributions to those of our generation who love beauty. From the four quarters of the globe pilgrims come now, for example, to observe with emotion and to record with enthusiasm the survivals of Amerind culture in New Mexico and Arizona.

The government reports of ethnological and anthropological experts have taken on a new significance. The number of comparatively popular treatises on the arts of the Indian is increasing. The imaginative literature produced by certain of our contemporaries is being perceptibly affected by the facts disclosed in those reports. In particular, Mary Austin, Willa Cather, Witter Bynner, and John Neihardt, competently equipped and informed, have chosen Amerind themes, story material, and meters, and adapted them to the requirements of their fiction, drama, or poetry.

Hartley Burr Alexander, professor of philosophy, since

1908, at the University of Nebraska, the authority who was called upon to write the volumes for North America and for South America in the *Mythology of All the Races* series, is one of those who have turned to literary account their knowledge of Indian lore. Thus he has chosen five of the most prominent Aztec deities for poetic interpretation, aiming, as he says, "to reproduce the central spirit of the deities represented." On the goddess, Xochiquetzal, for example, he writes:

> Radiant Lily, there where thou standest
> Exhaling fragrance,
> A Butterfly to thy lips clinging,
> Radiant Lily,
> I thank thee. . . .
> Is she not beautiful—
> The Lily of Life?

Or he transcribes a familiar Indian figure, *The Flint Maker,* in this wise:

> For him the dump stone is no blind thing—
> Jasper and agate and flint,—
> But a jewel and a tool and a mined thing
> Cast in the Earth-Maker's mint.

Indian modes of thought, their natural poetic images, and their rhythms are suggested in these interpretations composed by Professor Alexander. In these lines from *Mirage* there are traces of all three:

> The footfalls of many feet are on the prairies,
> Treading softly, like the rustling of shaken grasses;
> In the air about me is a sound scarce audible,
> As of the wings of silent birds, low-flying. . . .

as there are also in this passage from *The Great Drum:*

I am very small, as I dance upon the drum-head;
I am like a particle of dust, as I dance upon the drum-head;
Above me in the sky is the shining ball of the drumstick. . . .

Who is the Drummer who beats upon the earth-drum?
Who is the Drummer who makes me to dance his song?

Both of these fragments are quoted from Alexander's article on " American Myth Poems," in which he explains and illustrates his method of procedure in dealing with Indian material. In his own words, " The poetic spirit of the American Indian is a thing to be retrieved fragmentarily, partly through the echoes of old songs, partly through the dim rememberings of ancient beliefs."

The parallel is often drawn by Mary Austin, Hartley Burr Alexander, and others between the development of the ancient Greek drama out of ritual dances and the growth of an Indian theatre from the practices of various forms of sympathetic magic. In general terms, " sympathetic magic " means the pantomime performed by primitive man to produce a desired situation, the dramatic action being mimetic and representing whatever boon is being sought. Thus, among the Indians, there are rain dances, corn dances, buffalo dances, and similar rites designed to insure food abundance, success in the hunt, or victory in battle.

All primitive peoples have rites expressing their yearning for the restoration of life. From this class of ceremonies springs probably a story like the Orpheus and Eurydice myth of the Old World. Hartley Burr Alexander, author of *Carved Woman,* has classified the fable

of this moving Indian mask as a version of the Orpheus and Eurydice story. There are several Amerind versions of this myth, and these generally parallel the main features of the ancient Greek story. Orpheus, son of Apollo and Calliope, as the familiar tale runs, is granted permission to descend into Hades to rescue his beloved wife, Eurydice, from the spirit world. But there is the well known condition to be complied with: a tabu is interposed which prohibits him from turning to gaze upon his wife until the reaches of the upper world be attained.

> Now, past all peril free was his return,
> And now was hastening into upper air
> Eurydice, when sudden madness seized
> The incautious lover; pardonable fault,
> If they below could pardon: on the verge
> Of light he stood, and on Eurydice
> (Mindless of fate, alas! and soul-subdued)
> Lookt back.[1]

The same haunting story was evidently a favorite with John Milton. In *L'Allegro* the power of the most enchanting music is thus measured:

> That Orpheus' self may heave his head
> From golden slumber on a bed
> Of heaped Elysian flowers, and hear
> Such strains as would have won the ear
> Of Pluto to have quite set free
> His half-regained Eurydice.

In the companion piece, *Il Penseroso,* an allusion is likewise made to the visit of Orpheus to the other world and to the magic power of his music:

[1] W. S. Landor's *Orpheus and Eurydice.*

Or bid the soul of Orpheus sing
Such notes as, warbled to the string,
Drew iron tears down Pluto's cheek,
And made Hell grant what love did seek.

In North America, a similar myth appears under various guises. The Yokut Indians relate how a husband, sorrowing beside his wife's grave, is confronted by an apparition. She beckons him on across a bridge to the land of spirits. Here he is granted his heart's desire. His wife may go with him provided that, as they return to the world of the living, he does not fall asleep. For the first two nights he watches, but on the third his weary eyelids close. In the morning he discovers a log by his side.

In the lore of the Hūrons a brother mourns for a sister who has died. He journeys to the Village of Souls, meeting his sister's spirit from time to time as he proceeds. Across a turbulent river, which he is able to cross only with the greatest difficulty, he comes upon a guide who gives him the information which will enable him to reach the dancing hall of the spirits. He is also instructed to lay hold on his sister's spirit and to keep it secure within a pumpkin until he rejoins the community of the living. The tabu in story resembles the prohibition laid upon Orpheus. The sister may be brought back to life provided that nobody spies on the process. The brother begins his incantations and feels the returning pulse of life. But a curious bystander ventures a glance, and the girl is reclaimed for the spirit band.

A Pawnee variant appears to have fewer elements in common with the Greek. A Pawnee brave has gone on the warpath to acquire ponies for the marriage payment. In his absence, the girl of his choice, ignorant of his

whereabouts, falls ill and dies. The brave, well supplied with ponies, coming back to the tribe, discovers finally that his sweetheart is dead. In the meantime the tribe has wandered on, but the young man returns to the site of the village where he left her. There, in an earth lodge from which smoke is rising, he is reunited with the girl. He apprehends that she is surrounded by the spirits of her dead relatives. These gradually become more visible to him. They counsel him that, if he can restrain her when living relatives approach with meat offerings, she will be restored to him. Three times he fails, but the fourth time, with some assistance, he prevails and returns with his spirit wife to the tribe. The tabu in this story involves a matter of temper. His wife may stay with him so long as he never exhibits anger toward her. A son is born, but, after a while, the brave takes on another wife. Quarrels follow. The Pawnee forgets and grows angry with his spirit wife. As it was foretold, the *revenant* disappears—in a whirlwind in this story—the child dies, and an attack of conscience carries off the husband.

In the version current among the Klikitat Indians, it is the girl who seeks out her spirit lover on a death island, localized among the Dalles of the Columbia River; a child is born who is not to be subjected to human scrutiny for ten days after its birth. This tabu is disregarded by one of the grandmothers and the child dies.

Sometimes [according to Alexander] the legend is made a part of the incident of the carved wife—the bereaved husband making a statue of the lost spouse, which may show a dim and troubled life, as if her soul were seeking to break through to him; and again it is the true Orphean tale with the partial success, the tabu broken through anxiety or love, and the spirit wife receding once more to the lower world.

The title of the collection in which the play *Carved Woman* is published is *Manito Masks*. "Manitou" is an Algonquian term, the name of a "spiritual or mysterious power." The word has long been familiar through Longfellow's frequent use of it in *Hiawatha*. Alexander calls these Indian plays "masks," because in spirit and interest they come nearer to this than to any other form of our traditional drama.

The music introduced into *Carved Woman* employs, among other themes, a suggestion from an Arapaho Ghost Dance song. There are Arapahos to be found in Oklahoma, Montana, Wyoming, and elsewhere. The Ghost Dance is modern, having arisen in connection with a Messianic movement that swept the Indians of half the United States about 1889 and 1890. "Ghost Dance Songs . . . are supposed to be the flashes of revelation brought from the dead in dreams, foretelling the approach of a spiritual revival." A quotation from this type of Arapaho song here follows:

> My children, my children,
> It is I who wear the morning star on my head;
> I show it to my children,
> Says the Father.[2]

The drum plays an important part in the music of *Carved Woman*. Of the use of the drum among the Indians, Mary Austin, in her article in the last volume of the *Cambridge History of American Literature*, has written: "All Indian life was so intensely democratic that there was very little to be danced and sung which had not to be danced and sung in common, by the group or tribe. When literature is danced or chanted in

[2] *The Path on the Rainbow.*

common there must be some common measure, some time-keeper. Among the Indians this was the drum, that 'breathing mouth of wood,' the hollow log or hoop with a stretched skin. All Amerind literature is of these two classes: it can be drummed to or it cannot."

Students of Indian culture, like Mary Austin and Hartley Alexander, with whose first-hand knowledge of the subject literary gifts are combined, believe that the future art life of America will owe much to the Indian of North, Central, and South America. Hartley Alexander looks forward especially to the development of a drama, founded on Indian rhythms, songs, and spectacles. To this end he asks for " the creation of a body of plays and the education of a corps of actors all for the sake of discovering the form of dramatic communication which will at the last approve itself as the proper vehicle for the Indian spirit, and in so doing will add its own gift to the arts of mankind."

CARVED WOMAN

The myth of Orpheus and Eurydice is as universal as are love and death. The theme recurs in the legendary lore of most Indian tribes, the version here chosen being taken from the Northwest Coast, where the art of the native wood-carver reaches the height of portraiture. No setting is called for excepting a curtain dividing at the center to reveal the form of Carved Woman, although, if a set be preferred, it should be executed with a suggestion of the highly individual style of the Indians of this region. The costumes, likewise, should be Northwestern in suggestion, but for this play very simple. Fillets about the head, shirt, leggings, moccasins or sandals, with a blanket for Considerate Man, caught at the thighs, is sufficient for the male characters. If color and pattern be desired, they can be used effectively in the dress of Carved Woman, pale yellow, light blue, and black, in the highly conventionalized modes of the Chilcat blankets. The melodic themes employed for the songs include one from Vancouver, while an Arapaho Ghost Dance song and Chippewa and Dakota melodies supply other suggestions. In rendering the play Considerate Man is to be thought of as the Indian sage, calm and deliberate, sympathetic, yet serene in his confidence. Singing Man is as one rapt away by his inner preoccupation, lifted into a kind of displacement from normal life, and turning, as an Indian naturally would, to the mystery of music for the solace of his sorrow; to his fellows he is in a sense sacred, devoted, by the very fact of his psychic estrangement. Carved Woman is of course the revenant spirit, summoned by love into temporary vision—which, again for the Indian, is but another mode of a reality which is never material.

CHARACTERS

CONSIDERATE MAN
SINGING MAN
CARVED WOMAN

Enter SINGING MAN *with a drum,* CONSIDERATE MAN *with a pipe; their dress is without ornament; moccasins, trousers, dark shirts, dull-colored kerchiefs about their heads;* CONSIDERATE MAN *with a blanket.*

SINGING MAN *seats himself at one side and begins to thrum his drum softly, crooning vocables to himself; his manner is wholly abstracted.* CONSIDERATE MAN *stands placidly, drawing a few whiffs of smoke from his long Indian pipe. Presently* SINGING MAN *bows his head, as in reflection.* CONSIDERATE MAN *turns to address the audience:*

CONSIDERATE MAN.

My friends, I desire to speak to you concerning the one whom you behold.
My friends, his heart is troubled;
For many days his heart is troubled;
Thrice has the moon changed, and the trouble is yet in his heart.
Always he sits with his drum, singing—
Always with his drum, trying to find new songs,
Singing to keep his heart up.
It is for this that we have named him Singing Man.

[SINGING MAN *again thrums softly.*]

CONSIDERATE MAN.

My friends, so it is with Singing Man ever since Beloved Woman left him.
Beloved Woman was his wife;
Now she is a ghost,
And because he cannot speak to her he does not know what to do with his life,

He cannot find any pathway for his life;
His heart is troubled.

[*The drum is silent.* CONSIDERATE MAN *draws a whiff of smoke and resumes:*]

Singing Man, my friends, converses much with his drum.
He hopes that his drum will discover for him new speech;
He hopes that his drum will find new songs for him,
Wherewith he may talk to the spirit of Beloved Woman;
He does not know what to do with his life;
He wishes her to tell him.
That is why he is asking his drum to teach him the language of spirits;
That is why he sits singing what his drum tells him to sing.
His heart is sad for Beloved Woman;
For her voice he is listening.

[SINGING MAN *again thrums softly, seeming to listen intently.*]

CONSIDERATE MAN.

My friends, we are much troubled because of the sadness of Singing Man;
We do not know what to do to help him.
Let us therefore take counsel together, if perchance his heart may be comforted.
Come with me, friends, that we may take counsel together, and bring healing to the sorrow of Singing Man.

[CONSIDERATE MAN *withdraws.* SINGING MAN *begins beating his drum more vigorously. He looks upward, as into the skies. Then he arises, eagerly.*]

SINGING MAN.

I hear voices . . .
Many musical voices . . .
Twittering like the soft voices of birds,
Singing, like little birds hidden amid the leaves, dew-laden . . .
Always I hear voices.
I cannot understand what they are saying to me . . .
I cannot learn their songs . . .
Her voice I do not hear.

[*He seems to see a bird, which he follows with the action indicated by his words.*]

Ha! It is the Bird!
It is Brooding Feathers—
She who nests in the burial scaffold,
She who makes her home with the bodies of the dead!
Can I but catch her! . . .
Here! . . . Here! . . .
Surely she is from Beloved Woman!

Ha! I have thee, Brooding Feathers!
Speak to me!
Whisper in mine ear!
What saith Beloved Woman?
In her grave lying, what saith she,
O thou who nestest where her heart is stilled? . .

Ah, ghost words!
I cannot understand them . . .
I will listen again.

Nay, flutter never so much, thou shalt not go!
Thou shalt speak to me—
Her words thou shalt speak to me!
. . . Ai! Go! . . .
I cannot understand thee!
My heart is very desolate;
My heart is deeply troubled.
With the dead there is no speech that I can learn;
There is no song that I can find . . .

[*He sinks down beside his drum, despondent.* CONSIDERATE MAN, *still with his pipe, enters sedately, and faces the audience.*]

CONSIDERATE MAN.

My friends, we have taken counsel together concerning the sorrow of Singing Man;

We are very hopeful.
The language of ghosts is thin and difficult;
The oldest men do not remember it;
The oldest women do not remember it;
But we are very hopeful.

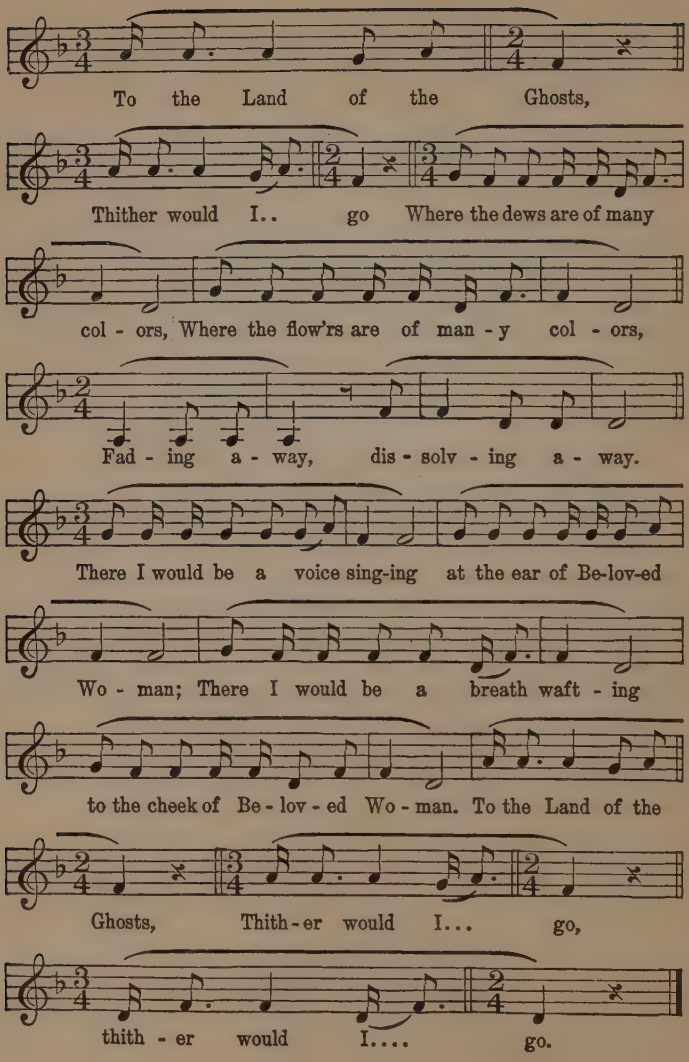
My friends, it is the artist His-Images-Speak who has lifted up our hearts.
His words seemed good, his counsel potent.
We have named him His-Images-Speak because wherever he carves in wood likeness of man or animal it seems excellent with life;
All of his images are like breathing bodies, all are like familiar voices.

It has seemed, then, good to us that he should cunningly execute the form of Beloved Woman,
That Singing Man might have her near to him;
That perchance she might speak to him—
Comforting his heart,
Counselling him concerning his life.
My friends, I have brought hither the work of His-Images-Speak;
Hither have I brought Carved Woman that she may bring comfort to the troubled life of Singing Man.

[*He draws the central curtain, disclosing* CARVED WOMAN *seated statuelike. He draws a whiff of smoke while he contemplates the image; then turns again to the audience.*]

It is well, my friends;
When his heart is prepared Singing Man will lift up his eyes.
He will behold Carved Woman;
Perchance she will speak to him.
Thus have we counselled together.

[CONSIDERATE MAN *goes out.* SINGING MAN *begins to drum softly, and presently to sing:*]


To the Land of the Ghosts,
Thither would I.. go Where the dews are of many
col - ors, Where the flow'rs are of man - y col - ors,
Fad - ing a - way, dis - solv - ing a - way.
There I would be a voice sing-ing at the ear of Be-lov-ed
Wo - man; There I would be a breath waft - ing
to the cheek of Be - lov - ed Wo - man. To the Land of the
Ghosts, Thith - er would I... go,
thith - er would I.... go.

CARVED WOMAN [*very softly*].

Singing Man! [SINGING MAN *lifts up his head, startled. Then he turns; his eyes catch the image of* CARVED WOMAN; *he stares; then leaps to his feet; he approaches a step, as in wonder.*]

SINGING MAN [*in awe*].

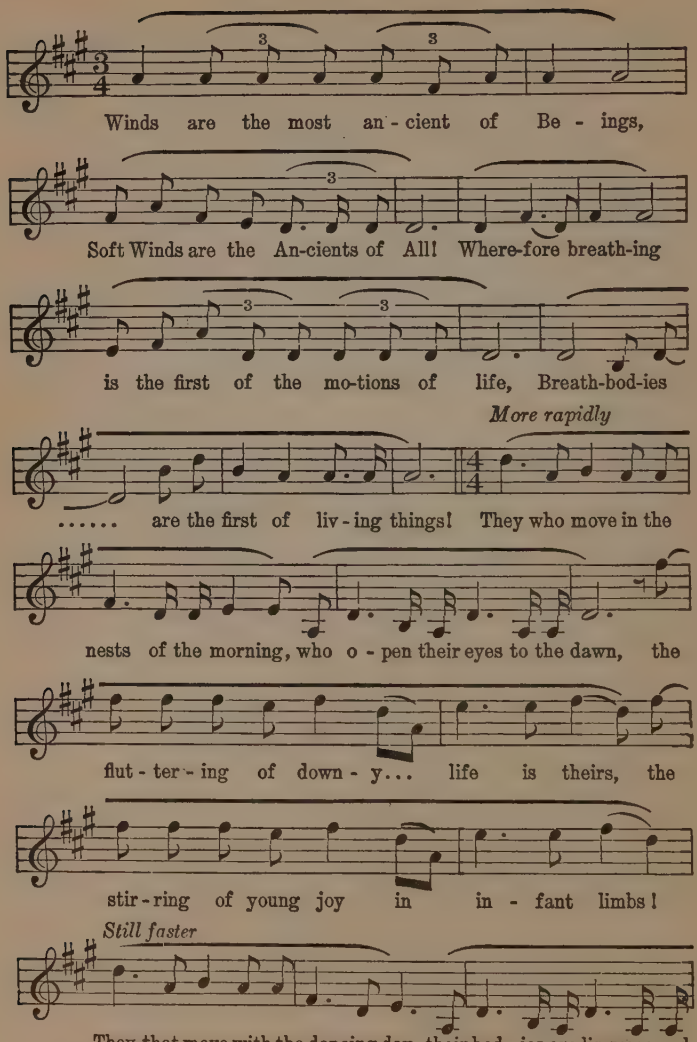
Beloved Woman! [*He moves a step nearer.*]
It is Beloved Woman! . . .
Oh, whence camest thou?
Out of the Land of the Ghosts how camest thou? . . .
Or am I . . . thither gone? . . .
Beloved Woman, speak!
He whose heart is become a tear beseecheth thee! . . .
She smiles!
She lives!
Beloved Woman lives! [*He drops to his knees, hands half raised.* CARVED WOMAN *slowly rises, and, as one unaccustomed to the body, advances a step.*]

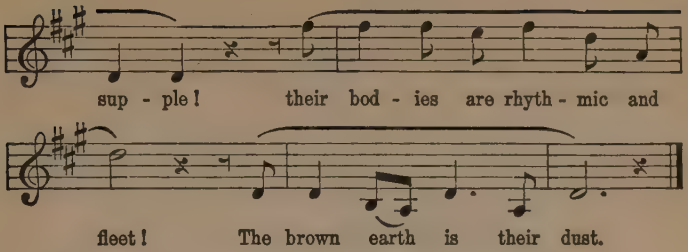
CARVED WOMAN.

How strange is this motion . . .
I am heavy with long sleep . . .
It is not so that we walk in dreams;
In the dreams of the dead it is not so . . .
It was not so that I walked in my customary body;
In my customary body I walked not so heavily . . .
I must have music, or I cannot walk!
I must have singing . . .
Make music for me, Singing Man . . .
That I may walk again, that I may live again!
[*She stands motionless, as if exhausted by effort.* SINGING MAN *takes up his drums and begins vigorously to drum and sing.*]

SINGING MAN.

Ho oh! Ho oh!
I sing the song of life!
I sing the song of motion! [*As he sings* CARVED WOMAN *begins to act, following the words.*]


Winds are the most an - cient of Be - ings,
Soft Winds are the An-cients of All! Where-fore breath-ing
is the first of the mo-tions of life, Breath-bod-ies
More rapidly
..... are the first of liv - ing things! They who move in the
nests of the morning, who o - pen their eyes to the dawn, the
flut - ter - ing of down - y... life is theirs, the
stir - ring of young joy in in - fant limbs!
Still faster
They that move with the dancing day, their bod - ies are lis-some and



[*He beats the drum crescendo, chanting vocables, while* CARVED WOMAN *dances to an ecstatic climax.*]

CARVED WOMAN [*joyously*].

O Singing Man!
Thou hast sung me into life!
Into this body thou hast sung me, out of the Ghostland!

SINGING MAN.

My heart is very high, Beloved Woman!
My heart is like a loud drum.

CARVED WOMAN.

Because thy heart is deep with music, O Singing Man,
For a little time I shall speak with thee.
I shall tell thee what to do with thy life—
In thine ear I shall whisper . . .

[*He bows before her. She kisses his hair, and continues:*]

Thereafter, I must go hence;
Thereafter I must return through the cunningly carved portal—
Unto Ghostland must I go, through the wood-carven gate . . .
O Singing Man, in Ghostland dwelling
Still I am thy wife, still thy Beloved Woman!
Wherever thou shalt see the bird Brooding Feathers,
Thou shalt know that she hath left the warm nest of my heart to come unto thee;
Thou shalt know that out of Ghostland I would speak to thee.

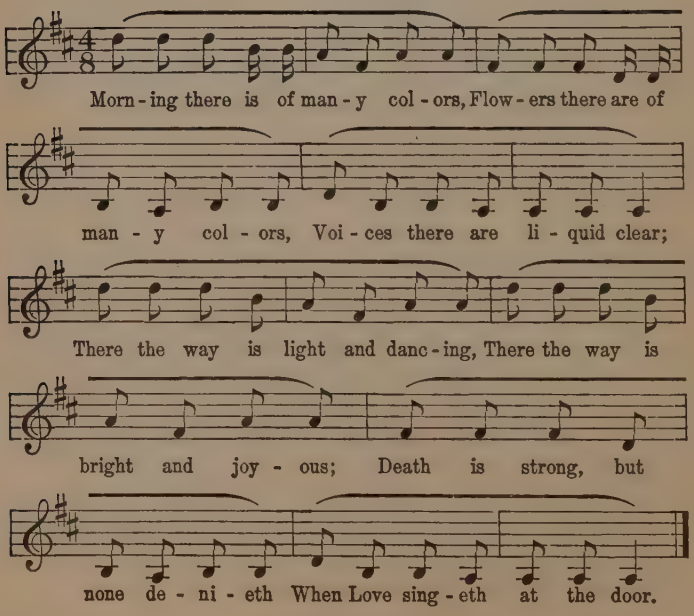
Take, then, thy drum, O Singing Man—
Harken, then, thy drum;

Sing the song it shall tell thee . . .
Sing the song which shall be my voice within thee,
My spirit within thee,
The Beloved within the Loving!

Then shalt thou know what to do with thy life, Singing Man . . .
Then, when thou singest . . .

[*Her voice grows fainter and more distant. The fiber of the wood is returning. She stiffens and straightens and slowly recedes to her original position, where again she is as a carven image.*]

SINGING MAN [*rises, reaches out his arms as in love, bows as in adoration; and then, trancelike, resumes his drumming, faint and palpitating, and begins to sing:*]


Morn - ing there is of man - y col - ors, Flow - ers there are of
man - y col - ors, Voi - ces there are li - quid clear;
There the way is light and danc - ing, There the way is
bright and joy - ous; Death is strong, but
none de - ni - eth When Love sing - eth at the door.

CONSIDERATE MAN [*enters, sedate as before. He looks at the form of* CARVED WOMAN, *impassive as a statue; he contemplates* SINGING MAN; *then he turns to the audience serenely:*]

My friends, it is well.

[CONSIDERATE MAN *draws the curtain.*]

[CURTAIN.]

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WHERE THE CROSS IS MADE[1]

A Play in One Act

By

EUGENE O'NEILL

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INTRODUCTION

WHERE THE CROSS IS MADE

An incredible amount of criticism and commentary on Eugene O'Neill and his plays has accumulated in the years since he began publishing. Certain facts in regard to his career have become relatively as well known as Shakespeare's legacy to his wife. The adventures of O'Neill's youth by land and by sea have been rehearsed in multiplying versions.[1] His seafaring, in particular, has proved fascinating to his biographers and critics. O'Neill's one-act melodrama *Where the Cross Is Made* is one of this dramatist's plays in which the sea is an important and moving force. The sea, as has been suggested, has been a protagonist in his own life, as well as in the existence of a large proportion of the characters whom he has created. Son of the actor James O'Neill, so definitely associated with one play, *The Count of Monte Cristo,* Eugene O'Neill was a child of the theatre. "Gene's earliest delight," according to John V. A. Weaver, a Harvard classmate, "was to make the canvas waves into which his father, the unforgettable Count of Monte Cristo, dived, emerging a moment after." But canvas waves, any more than the vicarious sense of sea adventure experienced in the pages of his early favorites, Jack London, Joseph Conrad, and Rudyard Kipling, were not destined to satisfy Eugene O'Neill. In his twenty-second year, his sea dreams began to be realized; he went

[1] For detailed treatment of the playwright's life, consult Barrett H. Clark's *Eugene O'Neill.*

with a mining engineer on a gold-prospecting expedition to the Spanish Honduras. An attack of tropical fever seems, on this trip, to have been the only treasure trove. In the next few years, O'Neill was to sail on a Norwegian barque from Boston to Buenos Aires and on a cattle steamer from the Argentine to South Africa and back, was to ship on a tramp steamer to New York, via Trinidad, and was, in sum, to make several other voyages.

O'Neill's repeated preoccupation with the sea is thus no mere literary mannerism. He is, as has been related, one of that company of writers who have desired the sea sufficiently to endure the hardships of life "before the mast"—or whatever is equivalent in these days of steam- and oil-driven ships—in order to slake their desires. Of this company are Conrad, Galsworthy, and Masefield.

There seems to be great bitterness as well as great beauty in the lives of seafaring men. John Masefield's *Dauber,* for instance, narrates unrelentingly in verse the brutal misfortunes which befell a

> Lampman and painter—tall, a slight-built man,
> Young for his years, and not yet twenty-two;
> Sickly, and not yet brown with the sea's tan.

This Dauber ships before the mast that he may collect first-hand impressions, recording them in color notes, of the changing surfaces of sky and water. Sensitive and delicate in spirit, awkward and fumbling in his seamanship, he becomes the butt of the forecastle. Bound for three years to endure the tortures of physical as well as mental cruelty, he is released when he hurtles to the deck from a topping height of the ship. This youngster, who perishes in an attempt to furl a sail in a sudden squall that breaks after Cape Horn has been rounded, has found solace in his allegiance to loveliness:

O, joy of trying for beauty, ever the same,
You never fail, your comforts never end;
O, balm of this world's way; O, perfect friend!

The Dauber is just such a character as might have suffered "under the moon of the Caribbees" on the *S.S. Glencairn.* He is just such a character as Masefield and O'Neill must many times have encountered in the course of their adventures as common seamen. Masefield's experience with the type was, in the alembic of his mind, converted to the uses of narrative poetry.

O'Neill's adventures with such strays became the essence of his dramas. Thus, in a sordid rooming-house on the water front, the atmosphere of which becomes palpable in O'Neill's short story *Tomorrow,* O'Neill met a stoker. This individual later committed suicide by jumping overboard in mid-ocean. Speculation on the reason for this course of action led O'Neill to write *The Hairy Ape,* a play in which Yank, of the ship's furnace room, is the embodiment of the brutalized and baffled worker. Similarly, the father of Anna Christie, in O'Neill's play of that name, has his prototype in a drunken seaman encountered in the same rooming-house, whose antipathy for the sea kept him swilling whiskey along the water front. He lost his life one Christmas Eve, drowned as he was boarding the coal barge he was to captain. Thus O'Neill's chance encounters with human derelicts like these have furnished him with characters from whose depths dramatic incident has been evolved.

The first of O'Neill's plays to be acted was *Bound East for Cardiff.* It was produced at the Wharf Theatre in Provincetown, Massachusetts, in 1916, by the company that became later in the same year the Provincetown Players, of Macdougal Street fame, in New York.

O'Neill has, from his and from their beginnings, been associated with the experiments of this group. *Thirst,* another one of O'Neill's early one-act plays, was given this same summer at the Wharf Theatre. It is a matter of record that, in the four years that followed, all O'Neill's short plays except *In the Zone,* produced by the Washington Square Players, were staged by the Provincetown group.

Between 1913 and the end of 1925, Eugene O'Neill wrote forty-seven plays. Of this number, fifteen were destroyed by the author. These statistics are based on the list, here reprinted, that appeared in the playbill when *The Fountain* was produced at the Greenwich Village Theatre in New York in 1925.

1913

A Wife for Life, one act. Destroyed.
The Web, one act. Published 1914, with four succeeding plays.
Thirst, one act. Produced 1916, by the Provincetown Players.

1914

Recklessness, one act.
Warnings, one act.
Fog, one act. Produced 1917, by Provincetown Players.
Bread and Butter, four acts. Destroyed.
Servitude, three acts. Destroyed.
Bound East for Cardiff, one act. Produced 1916, by the Provincetown Players.
Abortion, one act. Produced 1916, by the Provincetown Players.

1915

A Knock at the Door, one act, comedy. Destroyed.
The Sniper, one act. Produced 1917, by the Provincetown Players. Destroyed.

The Personal Equation, four acts. Destroyed.
Belshazzar, a Biblical play in scenes. Destroyed.

1916

Before Breakfast, one act. Produced 1916-17, by the Provincetown Players.
The Movie Man, one act, comedy. Destroyed.
Now I Ask You, three acts, farce-comedy. Destroyed.
Atrocity, one act, pantomime. Destroyed.
Ile, one act. Produced 1917, by the Provincetown Players.
In the Zone, one act. Produced 1917, by the Washington Square Players.
The Long Voyage Home, one act. Produced 1917, by the Provincetown Players.
The Moon of the Caribbees, one act. Produced 1918, by the Provincetown Players.
The G. A. M., one act, farce-comedy. Destroyed.

1918

Till We Meet, one act. Destroyed.
The Rope, one act. Produced 1918, by the Provincetown Players.
Beyond the Horizon, three acts, six scenes. Produced 1920, by John D. Williams.
The Dreamy Kid, one act. Produced 1919, by the Provincetown Players.
Shell-Shock, one act. Destroyed.
Where the Cross Is Made, one act. Produced 1918, by the Provincetown Players.
The Straw, three acts, five scenes. Produced 1921, by George C. Tyler.

1919

Honor Among the Bradleys, one act. Destroyed.
Chris, three acts, six scenes. Produced 1920, outside New York. Destroyed.

The Trumpets, one act, comedy. Destroyed.
Exorcism, one act, comedy. Produced 1920, by the Provincetown Players.

1920

Gold, four acts. Produced 1921, by John D. Williams.
Anna Christie, four acts. Produced 1921, by Arthur Hopkins.
The Emperor Jones, eight scenes. Produced 1920, by the Provincetown Players.
Diff'rent, two acts. Produced 1920, by the Provincetown Players.

1921

The First Man, four acts. Produced 1922, by Augustin Duncan and the Neighborhood Playhouse.
The Hairy Ape, eight scenes. Produced 1922, by the Provincetown Players.
The Fountain, eleven scenes. Produced 1925, by Macgowan, Jones, and O'Neill, in association with Jones and Green.

1923

Welded, three acts. Produced 1924, by Macgowan, Jones, and O'Neill, in association with the Selwyns.
All God's Chillun Got Wings, two acts, seven scenes. Produced 1924, by the Provincetown Players.

1924

Desire Under the Elms. Produced 1924, by the Provincetown Players, Inc.
Marco Millions. Unproduced.

1925

The Great God Brown, five acts and epilogue. Produced 1926, by Macgowan, Jones, and O'Neill.
Lazarus Laughs. Uncompleted.

To these items may be added a version for the stage of the *Book of Revelations,* promised for early production, and *The Ancient Mariner,* a dramatic arrangement of Coleridge's poem, which, in 1924, was put on at the Provincetown Playhouse in New York.

From this same list it will be seen that *Where the Cross Is Made* was produced by the Provincetown Players in 1918, and that *Gold,* the four-act version, was produced three years later. There has been some confusion in regard to the relation of these two plays. At least one critic of reputation has described the longer play as a later and expanded version of the one-act melodrama. However, on Barrett H. Clark's authority, this misunderstanding is cleared up. Mr. Clark quotes a letter that the author himself wrote to George Jean Nathan in which, in no uncertain terms, he makes it quite clear that the "idea of *Gold*" took shape in his imagination from the very beginning as material for a long play. *Where the Cross Is Made* was, according to the same source, a close-packed and condensed form of *Gold,* thus reshaped in order that O'Neill might make his contribution to an opening bill of the Provincetown Players. In this same letter O'Neill improvises the phrase "natural short play" to describe an artistic unit as complete and self-contained as a short-story. He is of the opinion that the material of a one-act play satisfying all the requirements of that form, is inelastic. This distinction is of the greatest importance in connection with *Gold* and the briefer *Where the Cross Is Made.* O'Neill expresses his doctrine—reminiscent of Poe's similar views on the short-story—with conviction. It is conceivable, however, that other writers of distinction might reverse his experience. One of the greatest short-story writers of all time, de Maupassant, did successfully expand a brief but symmetrically

proportioned narrative into a brilliant one-volume romance which has been generally acclaimed. In matters of this sort every genius is a law unto himself. In another letter to Nathan, quoted also by Barrett Clark in the same book, O'Neill, contributing his own criticism of *Where the Cross Is Made,* observes: "It was great fun to write, theatrically very thrilling, an amusing experiment in treating the audience as insane."

As a study in the technique of Eugene O'Neill, it is interesting to compare in some detail the two plays *Gold* and *Where the Cross Is Made,* the latter a variant and later version of the last act of the longer play. Schematically the comparison may be carried out as follows:

CHARACTERS

Gold	*Where the Cross Is Made*
Captain Isaiah Bartlett, *of the whaling ship,* "Triton"	Captain Isaiah Bartlett
	Nat Bartlett, *his son*
	Sue Bartlett, *his daughter*
	Doctor Higgins
Silas Horne, *boatswain of the* "Triton"	Silas Horne, *mate of the schooner* "Mary Allen"
Ben Cates, Jimmy Kanaka } *of the* "Triton's" *crew*	Cates, *bo'sun* } *of the schooner* "Mary Allen"
	Jimmy Kanaka, *harpooner* } *of the schooner* "Mary Allen"
Butler, *cook of the* "Triton"	
Abel, *the ship's boy*	
Sarah Allen Bartlett, *the captain's wife*	
Sue, *their daughter*	
Nat, *their son*	
Daniel Drew, *officer of a freight steamer*	
Doctor Beery	

PLACE AND TIME

Gold

Act I
Setting: "A barren coral island on the fringe of the Malay Archipelago. Noon."
Act II
Setting: "Interior of a boat shed on the wharf of the Bartlett place on the California Coast. An afternoon six months later."
Act III
Setting: "Exterior of the Bartlett house—dawn of the following morning."
Act IV
Setting: "Bartlett's 'cabin'—his lookout post—at the top of the house. A night one year later." About the year 1900.

Where the Cross is Made

Scene: Substantially as in Act IV of *Gold*. A night in the fall of the year 1900.

SPECIMEN STAGE DIRECTION

Gold

"Moonlight creeps in through the portholes on the right."

Where the Cross is Made

"Moonlight, winnowed by the wind which moans in the stubborn angles of the old house, creeps wearily in through the portholes and rests like tired dust in circular patches upon the floor and table."

ACTION

Gold

Act I

The marooned crew of the *Triton* discovers Malay ornaments in half-buried canoe. Captain Bartlett, Horne, Cates, and Jimmy Kanaka are half crazed by thirst and the uncertainty of rescue. The alliance of Butler and Abel is strengthened by their hatred of Captain Bartlett and the rest of the crew. Butler convinces Abel that the "gold" is in reality a cheap imitation. After the sighting of a sail, the captain, maddened by Butler's skepticism, incites Jimmy to murder Butler and Abel. The captain buries the chest as a rescuing ship is hailed.

Act II

Captain Bartlett, at home, preparing to return for the buried treasure, shares Horne's uneasiness because Mrs. Bartlett refuses to christen the new schooner. Bartlett, haunted by the murders committed, sleeps in the boat shed, away from his wife, for fear of betraying his guilty connivance. The captain is intent on keeping the

Where the Cross is Made

The first three acts of *Gold* are summarized, in the one-act play, in the speeches that begin with Nat's on p. 333: "There are cases where facts . . ."; and end with the same character's words on p. 336: "Malay ornaments."

knowledge of the nature of the prospective voyage from his son, Nat. Mrs. Bartlett, worn out by her suspicion of her husband, is seriously ill. Sue and her fiancé, Danny, discuss the captain's obsession in regard to "tradin' in the Islands" in preference to whaling. That the house has been mortgaged to fit out the schooner is disclosed. The captain has always been gold-crazy. Danny refers to his newly gained master's certificate. Nat is introduced as anxious to give up his work in a shipyard and go on the voyage. He suspects a treasure hunt of some kind. Mrs. Bartlett taxes her husband with murder. He denies her charges and grows ecstatic over the luxuries that the buried treasure will buy for his wife. Mrs. Bartlett, intimidated by her husband's threat to take Nat on the voyage with him, weakens and promises to christen the schooner.

Act III

At Sue's instance, Cates and Horne plot against Captain Bartlett and Jimmy. Danny Drew steals a march on Bartlett and takes the

Sarah Allen out to sea. Captain Bartlett is left behind. He quarrels insanely with his wife over his sins and the curse that rests on his enterprise. She collapses.

Act IV

Mrs. Bartlett has died in the interim. The *Sarah Allen* has been lost. Bartlett's madness has infected his son. Despite indisputable proof, neither is convinced that the schooner *Sarah Allen* is really wrecked. Sue shows her brother Danny's letter relating how Horne and the others had stabbed him and left him for dead but giving the news of his subsequent recovery and imminent return. Captain Bartlett is shown nourishing delusions of the return of the schooner, treasure-laden, recalling his crimes, and prophesying great riches to his wife. He is surprised by Nat, who pounces on the map on which the cross is made. Captain Bartlett justifies the murders to his son. Nat, peering out to sea with his father, becomes partner in the hallucination of the *Sarah Allen's* return. He goes down to reconnoitre and returns convinced of his father's de-

Nat is discussing plans with Dr. Higgins for railroading his father into an asylum. Nat describes his father's hallucinations and states the fact of the *Mary Allen's* loss. Nat relates in tabloid form the succession of events in the first three acts of *Gold*. He cites the foreclosing of a mortgage on the house, his sister's approaching marriage, and a hope of the captain's ultimate recovery as reasons for putting his father under restraint. Sue surprises Nat and ferrets out his scheme. He enlarges on the danger of foreclosure and exhibits his resentment against his father for sending him to sea. Nat has lost an arm during his days as sailor. Sue offers her father and brother a home. Nat speaks of finishing a book in the house, where the foreclosure of the mortgage will keep him on as caretaker. The incarceration of his father will make this arrangement possible. Nat

lusion. Sue pleads with her father to save Nat's sanity by means of the truth. Nat urges his father to make it plain whether the treasure was really gold. Captain Bartlett exhibits the pinchbeck bracelet and Nat recovers. Captain Bartlett, finally released from his obsession, tears up the map and dies.

tries to win his sister's connivance with talk of the money that will come to them when the house is sold. He produces the map, on which the cross is made, as evidence of Captain Bartlett's madness. The son burns the map and announces that the only other chart was in the hands of Silas Horne, now lost. Captain Bartlett appears and, accusing his children of treachery, points out the returning *Mary Allen*, showing at her masthead the red and green lights of the agreement. *Nat sees the lights.* He and his father watch Horne, Cates, and Jimmy Kanaka row ashore and *both* hear the chests being carried upstairs. A green undersea light pervades the room. The three seamen in the guise of the long shipwrecked enter. Horne is seen to restore the map to Captain Bartlett, who leads the treasure-bearers up the companionway. Nat tries to follow but pounds the locked door impotently. Dr. Higgins returns, flashes his pocket torch, and the moonlight floods back. The doctor announces that the door is open and that the captain has

fainted. The captain is then discovered to be dead. Nat rescues the map from the captain's clenched fingers and announces that he will carry on the quest. Sue is broken-hearted to find that her sanity has availed to save neither father nor brother.

The one-act version dispenses with four characters: Butler, the cook of the wrecked whaling vessel; Abel, the ship's boy—complicity in the murder of both of whom is the tragic cause of the captain's madness; Sarah Allen Bartlett, the mad captain's wife, and Daniel Drew, Sue Bartlett's fiancé, whose letter is one of the resolving forces in *Where the Cross Is Made,* but who does not appear in the condensed version of the play. In *Gold,* Doctor Beery is family friend as well as physician; Doctor Higgins of the one-act play is cold-blooded and impersonal.

The setting of Act IV of *Gold* and that of the later *Where the Cross Is Made* are substantially the same. In general, as suggested by the specimen stage direction, the later and shorter play elaborates on the stage directions of the earlier and longer play. Since no new invention is required, there would be a natural tendency to make the directions more specific, more intricate, and probably more literary. The skill shown by O'Neill in condensing the dramatic material of three acts within the compass of a few speeches seems to demonstrate the gain in power that comes to maturing genius.

An examination of that portion of the one-act play in which Nat joins with his father, Captain Bartlett, in

recognizing the red-and-green masthead signal and a scrutiny of the action which brings Silas Horne, Cates, and Jimmy Kanaka, bearing the treasure chest, on to the stage in "a dense green glow," flooding "slowly in rhythmic waves . . . into the room—as of great depths of the sea," will make clear O'Neill's cryptic saying in regard to the participation of the audience in a psychological state. The current sets toward sanity, and the audience is emotionally released when "clear moonlight floods through the portholes" and Dr. Higgins demonstrates that the slide at the top of the companionway is "all open."

O'Neill does not write short plays now. For himself he has lost interest in the form, though he considers that the one-act play "is a fine vehicle for something poetical, for something spiritual in feeling that cannot be carried through a long play."[2] It must likewise be remembered that, between 1915 and 1922, the Provincetown Players, for whom O'Neill wrote almost exclusively, presented one-act plays, not because they preferred the form, but plainly on account of limited resources. To this company O'Neill owes much. As Dickinson has expressed the situation in his *Playwrights of the New American Theatre,* "O'Neill was the first playwright to be a free agent in the theatre. He is the playwright unbound."

The first of O'Neill's longer plays to be presented, *Beyond the Horizon,* won the Pulitzer Prize in 1920. The award came to him again in 1922, when *Anna Christie* won him the distinction. Academic honors multiplied. In 1926 Yale University conferred on him the degree of doctor of letters. The most distinguished student of George Pierce Baker's English 47 at Harvard was thus honored at the conclusion of Professor Baker's first

[2] B. H. Clark, *Eugene O'Neill,* p. 40. New York, 1926.

academic year at Yale. William Lyon Phelps, Orator of the Day, prefaced the bestowal of the hood with these words: "To mention his plays is to recall some of the most significant successes of the American Theatre—*Beyond the Horizon, The Emperor Jones, Anna Christie, The Great God Brown.* O'Neill is an experimentalist; after having mastered the technique of conventional playwrighting, he boldly tried new forms and new methods of expression. He is the only American dramatist who has produced a deep impression on European drama and European thought, and his name is known and respected in every part of our own country. Making no compromises and no concessions to managerial or popular taste, he has redeemed the American theatre from commonplaceness and triviality; and his fame is only in its dawn." [8]

The plays singled out for mention by Professor Phelps signify, for various reasons, in the artistic development of O'Neill. *Beyond the Horizon* is interesting as a specimen reaction to New England character. Like *The Rope* or *The First Man* or *Diff'rent* or *Desire Under the Elms,* it is a dramatic presentation of what frustration may produce in the way of wry and twisted lives. If only the protagonists of *Beyond the Horizon* had better understood themselves; had been honest in their judgment of their own motives and in their relations with others; had had, moreover, the courage to make the necessary radical readjustments, their lives would have been lifted to planes of personal happiness and social productivity. O'Neill sees, however, no alternative to disaster for the New England temperament as he embodies it in these plays.

The Emperor Jones commands critical attention. It is a play in eight scenes, six of which are dramatic mono-

[8] *Theatre Arts Monthly,* Vol. X, p. 716. New York, 1926.

logues. The play is accepted commonly as one of the few outstanding examples of the technique of expressionism in American drama. Elmer Rice, John Howard Lawson, and Eugene O'Neill have adapted this style to their own purposes. *The Emperor Jones* is a study of mounting fear. The successive scenes represent objectively types of anxiety that whip the desperate negro to his doom. Illusion and reality are indistinguishable as the action gathers speed. As in *Where the Cross Is Made,* the audience becomes party to the hallucination. The externalization of Jones's terror is accomplished in part by the throbbing of a tom-tom—beaten by his enemies—the varying rhythm and volume of which suggest the heart-beat of the hunted. O'Neill has in other plays made use of cadenced chants and spaced sounds to reproduce the throb of human emotion.

Among the plays enumerated by Professor Phelps, *Anna Christie,* the latest of O'Neill's sea dramas, is an apt illustration, as has been stated, of O'Neill's characteristic use of autobiographical stuff. Defeat of natural and simple human yearnings is the cause of tragedy in *Anna Christie.* "Throughout the play," as Andrew Malone has remarked, "one finds a *motif* which seems to obsess O'Neill's mind, the idea that everybody envies the life and the work of every other body. The seaman hates the 'ole davil sea' and desires an inland farm, while Anna Christie has fled from an inland farm for the life of the streets."

The Great God Brown is another projection of O'Neill's interest in the human being who desires to escape that closest part of his environment, himself. The characters in this play interpose their masks as screens, or assume them as protective disguises in the fashion of primitive man the world over. O'Neill here puts these savage symbols of mummery to novel philosophical uses.

With masks he expresses in terms of the most ancient theatre a philosophy of life which explains the shifts, evasions, and compromises of society.

There are romantic elements in all the work of Eugene O'Neill, but in two of his latest plays, *Marco Millions* (known to the general public so far only through George Jean Nathan's synopsis) and *The Fountain,* he leaves the New England farm, the tramp steamer, the city resorts and streets, for remote lands and far-off times. In the first of these, a satirical comedy, the Xanadu and Kubla Khan of Coleridge's fantasy are reimagined in O'Neill's own terms to serve as rich background for a series of jokes at the expense of fat success. In *The Fountain* also, the materialists of the world, " who would sack heaven and melt the moon for silver," are contrasted with the types of all seekers for beauty, revealed in this play of O'Neill's in the person of Juan Ponce de León. The eleven scenes that comprise *The Fountain* are written with the fire and the intemperance of a Marlowe. The extravagance of idea and expression recall the wasteful magnificence of that great spirit of the Renaissance. O'Neill's theme has its perfect setting in Spain and in the Spanish possessions of some four hundred years ago. In the background there are the conventions of chivalry, the formalities of court life, the cruelties of the Inquisition, and the drive for wealth; in the foreground there are the sunlight, the patterned mosaics, the gleaming armor, tropical glades, copper bodies, glowing sunsets. So is the theme of *The Fountain,* " there is no gold but love; no heaven but youth," enhanced. The quest motive continues thus to interest O'Neill, as it did when he wrote *Gold* and *Where the Cross Is Made.* Ponce de León is Captain Bartlett's successor. But, as O'Neill develops, he is more explicit in his treatment of values.

Where the Cross Is Made: Captain Bartlett's "cabin." Since a large part of the theatrical effectiveness of this play depends upon the manipulation of lights, an arrangement has been planned which facilitates the slow flooding of the scene with a dense green glow.

WHERE THE CROSS IS MADE

CHARACTERS

CAPTAIN ISAIAH BARTLETT.
NAT BARTLETT, *his son.*
SUE BARTLETT, *his daughter.*
DOCTOR HIGGINS.
SILAS HORNE, *mate*
CATES, *bo'sun*
JIMMY KANAKA, *harpooner*
} *of the schooner* "Mary Allen"

SCENE: CAPTAIN BARTLETT'S *"cabin"—a room erected as a lookout post at the top of his house situated on a high point of land on the California coast. The inside of the compartment is fitted up like the captain's cabin of a deep-sea sailing vessel. On the left, forward, a porthole. Farther back, the stairs of the companionway. Still farther, two more portholes. In the rear, left, a marble-topped sideboard with a ship's lantern on it. In the rear, center, a door opening on stairs which lead to the lower house. A cot with a blanket is placed against the wall to the right of the door. In the right wall, five portholes. Directly under them, a wooden bench. In front of the bench, a long table with two straight-backed chairs, one in front, the other to the left of it. A cheap, dark-colored rug is on the floor. In the ceiling, midway from front to rear, a skylight, extending from opposite the door to above the left edge of the table. In the right extremity of the skylight is placed a floating ship's compass. The light from the binnacle sheds over this from above and seeps*

down into the room, casting a vague globular shadow of the compass on the floor.

The time is an early hour of a clear windy night in the fall of the year 1900. Moonlight, winnowed by the wind which moans in the stubborn angles of the old house, creeps wearily in through the portholes and rests like tired dust in circular patches upon the floor and table. An insistent monotone of thundering surf, muffled and far-off, is borne upward from the beach below.

After the curtain rises the door in the rear is opened slowly and the head and shoulders of NAT BARTLETT *appear over the sill. He casts a quick glance about the room and, seeing no one there, ascends the remaining steps and enters. He makes a sign to someone in the darkness beneath: "All right, Doctor."* DOCTOR HIGGINS *follows him into the room and, closing the door, stands looking with great curiosity around him. He is a slight, medium-sized, professional-looking man of about thirty-five.* NAT BARTLETT *is very tall, gaunt, and loose-framed. His right arm has been amputated at the shoulder and the sleeve on that side of the heavy mackinaw he wears hangs flabbily or flaps against his body as he moves. He appears much older than his thirty years. His shoulders have a weary stoop as if worn down by the burden of his massive head with its heavy shock of tangled black hair. His face is long, bony, and sallow, with deep-set black eyes, a large aquiline nose, a wide, thin-lipped mouth shadowed by an unkempt bristle of moustache. His voice is low and deep with a penetrating, hollow, metallic quality. In addition to the mackinaw, he wears corduroy trousers stuffed down into high laced boots.*

NAT. Can you see, Doctor?

HIGGINS [*in the too-casual tones which betray an inward uneasiness*]. Yes—perfectly—don't trouble. The moonlight is so bright—

NAT. Luckily. [*Walking slowly toward the table.*] He

doesn't want any light—lately—only the one from the binnacle there.

HIGGINS. He? Ah—you mean your father?

NAT [*impatiently*]. Who else?

HIGGINS [*a bit startled—gazing around him in embarrassment*]. I suppose this is all meant to be like a ship's cabin?

NAT. Yes—as I warned you.

HIGGINS [*in surprise*]. Warned me? Why, warned? I think it's very natural—and interesting—this whim of his.

NAT [*meaningly*]. Interesting, it may be.

HIGGINS. And he lives up here, you said—never comes down?

NAT. Never—for the past three years. My sister brings his food up to him. [*He sits down in the chair to the left of the table.*] There's a lantern on the sideboard there, Doctor. Bring it over and sit down. We'll make a light. I'll ask your pardon for bringing you to this room on the roof—but—no one'll hear us here; and by seeing for yourself the mad way he lives— Understand that I want you to get all the facts—just that, facts!—and for that, light is necessary. Without that—they become dreams up here—dreams, Doctor.

HIGGINS [*with a relieved smile carries over the lantern*]. It is a trifle spooky.

NAT [*not seeming to notice this remark*]. He won't take any note of this light. His eyes are too busy—out there. [*He flings his left arm in a wide gesture seaward.*] And if he does notice—well, let him come down. You're bound to see him sooner or later. [*He scratches a match and lights the lantern.*]

HIGGINS. Where is—he?

NAT [*pointing upward*]. Up on the poop. Sit down, man! He'll not come—yet awhile.

HIGGINS [*sitting gingerly on the chair in front of table*]. Then he has the roof too rigged up like a ship?

NAT. I told you he had. Like a deck, yes. A wheel, compass, binnacle light, the companionway there [*he points*], a bridge to pace up and down on—*and keep watch.* If the wind wasn't so high you'd hear him now—back and forth—all

the live-long night. [*With a sudden harshness.*] Didn't I tell you he's mad?

HIGGINS [*with a professional air*]. That was nothing new. I've heard that about him from all sides since I first came to the asylum yonder. You say he only walks at night—up there?

NAT. Only at night, yes. [*Grimly.*] The things he wants to see can't be made out in daylight—dreams and such.

HIGGINS. But just what is he trying to see? Does anyone know? Does he tell?

NAT [*impatiently*]. Why, everyone knows what Father looks for, man! The ship, of course.

HIGGINS. What ship?

NAT. His ship—the *Mary Allen*—named for my dead mother.

HIGGINS. But—I don't understand— Is the ship long overdue—or what?

NAT. Lost in a hurricane off the Celebes with all on board—three years ago!

HIGGINS [*wonderingly*]. Ah. [*After a pause.*] But your father still clings to a doubt—

NAT. There is no doubt for him or anyone else to cling to. She was sighted bottom up, a complete wreck, by the whaler *John Slocum.* That was two weeks after the storm. They sent a boat out to read her name.

HIGGINS. And hasn't your father ever heard—

NAT. He was the first to hear, naturally. Oh, he *knows* right enough, if that's what you're driving at. [*He bends toward the doctor—intensely.*] He *knows,* Doctor, he *knows*—but he won't *believe.* He can't—and keep living.

HIGGINS [*impatiently*]. Come, Mr. Bartlett, let's get down to brass tacks. You didn't drag me up here to make things more obscure, did you? Let's have the facts you spoke of. I'll need them to give sympathetic treatment to his case when we get him to the asylum.

NAT [*anxiously—lowering his voice*]. And you'll come to take him away tonight—for sure?

HIGGINS. Twenty minutes after I leave here I'll be back in the car. That's positive.

NAT. And you know your way through the house?

HIGGINS. Certainly, I remember—but I don't see—

NAT. The outside door will be left open for you. You must come right up. My sister and I will be here—with him. And you understand— Neither of us knows anything about this. The authorities have been complained to—not by us, mind—but by someone. He must never know—

HIGGINS. Yes, yes—but still I don't— Is he liable to prove violent?

NAT. No—no. He's quiet always—too quiet; but he might do something—anything—if he knows—

HIGGINS. Rely on me not to tell him, then; but I'll bring along two attendants in case— [*He breaks off and continues in matter-of-fact tones.*] And now for the facts in this case, if you don't mind, Mr. Bartlett.

NAT [*shaking his head—moodily*]. There are cases where facts— Well, here goes—the brass tacks. My father was a whaling captain as his father before him. The last trip he made was seven years ago. He expected to be gone two years. It was four before we saw him again. His ship had been wrecked in the Indian Ocean. He and six others managed to reach a small island on the fringe of the Archipelago—an island barren as hell, Doctor—after seven days in an open boat. The rest of the whaling crew never were heard from again—gone to the sharks. Of the six who reached the island with my father only three were alive when a fleet of Malay canoes picked them up, mad from thirst and starvation, the four of them. These four men finally reached Frisco. [*With great emphasis.*] They were my father; Silas Horne, the mate; Cates, the bo'sun; and Jimmy Kanaka, a Hawaiian harpooner. Those four! [*With a forced laugh.*] There are facts for you. It was all in the papers at the time—my father's story.

HIGGINS. But what of the other three who were on the island?

NAT [*harshly*]. Died of exposure, perhaps. Mad and

jumped into the sea, perhaps. That was the told story. Another was whispered—killed and eaten, perhaps! But gone—vanished—that, undeniably. That was the fact. For the rest—who knows? And what does it matter?

HIGGINS [*with a shudder*]. I should think it would matter—a lot.

NAT [*fiercely*]. We're dealing with facts, Doctor! [*With a laugh.*] And here are some more for you. My father brought the three down to this house with him—Horne and Cates and Jimmy Kanaka. We hardly recognized my father. He had been through hell and looked it. His hair was white. But you'll see for yourself—soon. And the others—they were all a bit queer, too—mad, if you will. [*He laughs again.*] So much for the facts, Doctor. They leave off there and the dreams begin.

HIGGINS [*doubtfully*]. It would seem—the facts are enough.

NAT. Wait. [*He resumes deliberately.*] One day my father sent for me and in the presence of the others told me the dream. I was to be heir to the secret. Their second day on the island, he said, they discovered in a sheltered inlet the rotten, water-logged hulk of a Malay prau—a proper war prau such as the pirates used to use. She had been there rotting—God knows how long. The crew had vanished—God knows where, for there was no sign on the island that man had ever touched there. The Kanakas went over the prau—they're devils for staying under water, you know—and they found—in two chests— [*He leans back in his chair and smiles ironically.*] Guess what, Doctor?

HIGGINS [*with an answering smile*]. Treasure, of course.

NAT [*leaning forward and pointing his finger accusingly at the other*]. You see! The root of belief is in you, too! [*Then he leans back with a hollow chuckle.*] Why, yes. Treasure, to be sure. What else? They landed it and—you can guess the rest, too—diamonds, emeralds, gold ornaments—innumerable, of course. Why limit the stuff of dreams? Ha-ha! [*He laughs sardonically as if mocking himself.*]

HIGGINS [*deeply interested*]. And then?

NAT. They began to go mad—hunger, thirst, and the rest—and they began to forget. Oh, they forgot a lot, and lucky for them they did, probably. But my father, realizing, as he told me, what was happening to them, insisted that while they still knew what they were doing they should—guess again now, Doctor. Ha-ha!

HIGGINS. Bury the treasure?

NAT [*ironically*]. Simple, isn't it? Ha-ha. And then they made a map—the same old dream, you see—with a charred stick, and my father had care of it. They were picked up soon after, mad as hatters, as I have told you, by some Malays. [*He drops his mocking and adopts a calm, deliberate tone again.*] But the map isn't a dream, Doctor. We're coming back to facts again. [*He reaches into the pocket of his mackinaw and pulls out a crumpled paper.*] Here. [*He spreads it out on the table.*]

HIGGINS [*craning his neck eagerly*]. Dammit! This is interesting. The treasure, I suppose, is where—

NAT. Where the cross is made.

HIGGINS. And here are the signatures, I see. And that sign?

NAT. Jimmy Kanaka's. He couldn't write.

HIGGINS. And below? That's yours, isn't it?

NAT. As heir to the secret, yes. We all signed it here the morning the *Mary Allen,* the schooner my father had mortgaged this house to fit out, set sail to bring back the treasure. Ha-ha.

HIGGINS. The ship he's still looking for—that was lost three years ago?

NAT. The *Mary Allen,* yes. The other three men sailed away on her. Only father and the mate knew the approximate location of the island—and I—as heir. It's— [*He hesitates, frowning.*] No matter. I'll keep the mad secret. My father wanted to go with them—but my mother was dying. I dared not go either.

HIGGINS. Then you wanted to go? You believed in the treasure then?

NAT. Of course. Ha-ha. How could I help it? I believed until my mother's death. Then *he* became mad, entirely mad. He built this cabin—to wait in—and he suspected my growing doubt as time went on. So, as final proof, he gave me a thing he had kept hidden from them all—a sample of the richest of the treasure. Ha-ha. Behold! [*He takes from his pocket a heavy bracelet thickly studded with stones and throws it on the table near the lantern.*]

HIGGINS [*picking it up with eager curiosity—as if in spite of himself*]. Real jewels?

NAT. Ha-ha! You want to believe, too. No—paste and brass—Malay ornaments.

HIGGINS. You had it looked over?

NAT. Like a fool, yes. [*He puts it back in his pocket and shakes his head as if throwing off a burden.*] Now you know why he's mad—waiting for that ship—and why in the end I had to ask you to take him away where he'll be safe. The mortgage—the price of that ship—is to be foreclosed. We have to move, my sister and I. We can't take him with us. She is to be married soon. Perhaps away from the sight of the sea he may—

HIGGINS [*perfunctorily*]. Let's hope for the best. And I fully appreciate your position. [*He gets up, smiling.*] And thank you for the interesting story. I'll know how to humor him when he raves about treasure.

NAT [*sombrely*]. He is quiet always—too quiet. He only walks to and fro—watching—

HIGGINS. Well, I must go. You think it's best to take him tonight?

NAT [*persuasively*]. Yes, Doctor. The neighbors—they're far away but—for my sister's sake—you understand.

HIGGINS. I see. It must be hard on her—this sort of thing— Well—[*He goes to the door, which* NAT *opens for him.*] I'll return presently. [*He starts to descend.*]

NAT [*urgently*]. Don't fail us, Doctor. And come right up.

He'll be here. [*He closes the door and tiptoes carefully to the companionway. He ascends it a few steps and remains for a moment listening for some sound from above. Then he goes over to the table, turning the lantern very low, and sits down, resting his elbow, his chin on his hand, staring sombrely before him. The door in the rear is slowly opened. It creaks slightly and* NAT *jumps to his feet.—In a thick voice of terror.*] Who's there? [*The door swings wide open, revealing* SUE BARTLETT. *She ascends into the room and shuts the door behind her. She is a tall, slender woman of twenty-five, with a pale, sad face framed in a mass of dark red hair. This hair furnishes the only touch of color about her. Her full lips are pale; the blue of her wistful wide eyes is fading into a twilight gray. Her voice is low and melancholy. She wears a dark wrapper and slippers.*]

SUE [*stands and looks at her brother accusingly*]. It's only I. What are you afraid of?

NAT [*averts his eyes and sinks back on his chair again*]. Nothing. I didn't know—I thought you were in your room.

SUE [*comes to the table*]. I was reading. Then I heard someone come down the stairs and go out. Who was it? [*With sudden terror.*] It wasn't—Father?

NAT. No. He's up there—watching—as he always is.

SUE [*sitting down—insistently*]. Who was it?

NAT [*evasively*]. A man—I know.

SUE. What man? What is he? You're holding something back. Tell me.

NAT [*raising his eyes defiantly*]. A doctor.

SUE [*alarmed*]. Oh! [*With quick intuition.*] You brought him up here—so that I wouldn't know!

NAT [*doggedly*]. No. I took him up here to see how things were—to ask him about Father.

SUE [*as if afraid of the answer she will get*]. Is he one of them—from the asylum? Oh, Nat, you haven't—

NAT [*interrupting her—hoarsely*]. No, no! Be still.

SUE. That would be—the last horror.

NAT [*defiantly*]. Why? You always say that. What

could be more horrible than things as they are? I believe—it would be better for him—away—where he couldn't see the sea. He'll forget his mad idea of waiting for a lost ship and a treasure that never was. [*As if trying to convince himself—vehemently.*] I believe this!

SUE [*reproachfully*]. You don't, Nat. You know he'd die if he hadn't the sea to live with.

NAT [*bitterly*]. And you know old Smith will foreclose the mortgage. Is that nothing? We cannot pay. He came yesterday and talked with me. He knows the place is his—to all purposes. He talked as if we were merely his tenants, curse him! And he swore he'd foreclose immediately unless—

SUE [*eagerly*]. What?

NAT [*in a hard voice*]. Unless we have—Father—taken away.

SUE [*in anguish*]. Oh! But why, why? What is Father to him?

NAT. The value of the property—our home which is his, Smith's. The neighbors are afraid. They pass by on the road at nights coming back to their farms from the town. They see *him* up there walking back and forth—waving his arms against the sky. They're afraid. They talk of a complaint. They say for his own good he must be taken away. They even whisper the house is haunted. Old Smith is afraid of his property. He thinks that *he* may set fire to the house—do anything—

SUE [*despairingly*]. But you told him how foolish that was, didn't you? That Father is quiet, always quiet.

NAT. What's the use of telling—when they believe—when they're afraid? [SUE *hides her face in her hands—a pause—* NAT *whispers hoarsely.*] I've been afraid myself—at times.

SUE. Oh, Nat! Of what?

NAT [*violently*]. Oh, him and the sea he calls to! Of the damned sea he forced me on as a boy—the sea that robbed me of my arm and made me the broken thing I am!

SUE [*pleadingly*]. You can't blame Father—for your misfortune.

NAT. He took me from school and forced me on his ship, didn't he? What would I have been now but an ignorant sailor like him if he had had his way? No. It's the sea I should not blame, that foiled him by taking my arm and then throwing me ashore—another one of *his* wrecks!

SUE [*with a sob*]. You're bitter, Nat—and hard. It was so long ago. Why can't you forget?

NAT [*bitterly*]. Forget! You can talk! When Tom comes home from this voyage you'll be married and out of this with life before you—a captain's wife as our mother was. I wish you joy.

SUE [*supplicatingly*]. And you'll come with us, Nat—and Father, too—and then—

NAT. Would you saddle your young husband with a madman and a cripple? [*Fiercely.*] No, no, not I! [*Vindictively.*] And not him, either! [*With sudden meaning—deliberately.*] I've got to stay here. My book is three-fourths done—my book that will set me free! But I know, I feel, as sure as I stand here living before you, that I must finish it here. It could not live for me outside of this house where it was born. [*Staring at her fixedly.*] So I will stay—in spite of hell! [SUE *sobs hopelessly. After a pause he continues.*] Old Smith told me I could live here indefinitely without paying—as caretaker—if—

SUE [*fearfully—like a whispered echo*]. If?

NAT [*staring at her—in a hard voice*]. If I have *him* sent—where he'll no longer harm himself—nor others.

SUE [*with horrified dread*]. No—no, Nat! For our dead mother's sake.

NAT [*struggling*]. Did I say I had? Why do you look at me—like that?

SUE. Nat! Nat! For our mother's sake!

NAT [*in terror*]. Stop! Stop! She's dead—and at peace. Would you bring her tired soul back to him again to be bruised and wounded?

SUE. Nat!

NAT [*clutching at his throat as though to strangle some*

thing within him—hoarsely]. Sue! Have mercy! [*His sister stares at him with dread foreboding.* NAT *calms himself with an effort and continues deliberately.*] Smith said he would give two thousand cash if I would sell the place to him—and he would let me stay, rent free, as caretaker.

SUE [*scornfully*]. Two thousand! Why, over and above the mortgage, it's worth—

NAT. It's not what it's worth. It's what one can get, cash—for my book—for freedom!

SUE. So that's why he wants Father sent away, the wretch! He must know the will Father made—

NAT. Gives the place to me. Yes, he knows. I told him.

SUE [*dully*]. Ah, how vile men are!

NAT [*persuasively*]. If it were to be done—if it were, I say—there'd be half for you for your wedding portion. That's fair.

SUE [*horrified*]. Blood money! Do you think I could touch it?

NAT [*persuasively*]. It would be only fair. I'd give it you.

SUE. My God, Nat, are you trying to bribe me?

NAT. No. It's yours in all fairness. [*With a twisted smile.*] You forget I'm heir to the treasure, too, and can afford to be generous. Ha-ha.

SUE [*alarmed*]. Nat! You're so strange. You're sick, Nat. You couldn't talk this way if you were yourself. Oh, we must go away from here—you and Father and I! Let Smith foreclose. There'll be something over the mortgage; and we'll move to some little house—by the sea so that Father—

NAT [*fiercely*]. Can keep up his mad game with me—whispering dreams in my ear—pointing out to sea—mocking me with stuff like this! [*He takes the bracelet from his pocket. The sight of it infuriates him and he hurls it into a corner, exclaiming in a terrible voice.*] No! No! It's too late for dreams now. It's too late! I've put them behind me tonight—forever!

SUE [*looks at him and suddenly understands that what she*

dreads has come to pass—letting her head fall on her outstretched arms with a long moan]. Then—you've done it! You've sold him! Oh, Nat, you're cursed!

NAT [*with a terrified glance at the roof above*]. Ssshh! What are you saying? He'll be better off—away from the sea.

SUE [*dully*]. You've sold him.

NAT [*wildly*]. No! No! [*He takes the map from his pocket.*] Listen, Sue! For God's sake, listen to me! See! The map of the island. [*He spreads it out on the table.*] And the treasure—where the cross is made. [*He gulps and his words pour out incoherently.*] I've carried it about for years. Is that nothing? You don't know what it means. It stands between me and my book. It's stood between me and life—driving me mad! *He* taught me to wait and hope with him—wait and hope—day after day. He made me doubt my brain and give the lie to my eyes—when hope was dead—when I knew it was all a dream—I couldn't kill it! [*His eyes starting from his head.*] God forgive me, I still believe! And that's mad—mad, do you hear?

SUE [*looking at him with horror*]. And that is why—you hate him!

NAT. No, I don't— [*Then in a sudden frenzy.*] Yes! I do hate him! He's stolen my brain! I've got to free myself, can't you see, from him—and his madness.

SUE [*terrified—appealingly*]. Nat! Don't! You talk as if—

NAT [*with a wild laugh*]. As if I were mad? You're right—but I'll be mad no more! See! [*He opens the lantern and sets fire to the map in his hand. When he shuts the lantern again it flickers and goes out. They watch the paper burn with fascinated eyes as he talks.*] See how I free myself and become sane. And now for facts, as the doctor said. I lied to you about him. He was a doctor from the asylum. See how it burns! It must all be destroyed—this poisonous madness. Yes, I lied to you—see—it's gone—the last speck—and the only other map is the one Silas Horne took to the bottom of

the sea with him. [*He lets the ash fall to the floor and crushes it with his foot.*] Gone! I'm free of it—at last! [*His face is very pale, but he goes on calmly.*] Yes, I sold him, if you will—to save my soul. They're coming from the asylum to get him— [*There is a loud, muffled cry from above, which sounds like "Sail-ho," and a stamping of feet. The slide to the companionway above is slid back with a bang. A gust of air tears down into the room.* NAT *and* SUE *have jumped to their feet and stand petrified.* CAPTAIN BARTLETT *tramps down the stairs.*]

NAT [*with a shudder*]. God! Did he hear?

SUE. Ssshh! [CAPTAIN BARTLETT *comes into the room. He bears a striking resemblance to his son, but his face is more stern and formidable, his form more robust, erect, and muscular. His mass of hair is pure white, his bristly moustache the same, contrasting with the weather-beaten leather color of his furrowed face. Bushy gray brows overhang the obsessed glare of his fierce dark eyes. He wears a heavy, double-breasted blue coat, pants of the same material, and rubber boots turned down from the knee.*]

BARTLETT [*in a state of mad exultation strides toward his son and points an accusing finger at him.* NAT *shrinks backward a step.*] Bin thinkin' me mad, did ye? Thinkin' it for the past three years, ye bin—ever since them fools on the *Slocum* tattled their damn lie o' the *Mary Allen* bein' a wreck.

NAT [*swallowing hard—chokingly*]. No—Father—I—

BARTLETT. Don't lie, ye whelp! You that I'd made my heir—aimin' to git me out o' the way! Aimin' to put me behind the bars o' the jail for mad folk!

SUE. Father—no!

BARTLETT [*waving his hand for her to be silent*]. Not you, girl, not you. You're your mother.

NAT [*very pale*]. Father—do you think—I—

BARTLETT [*fiercely*]. A lie in your eyes! I bin a-readin' 'em. My curse on you!

SUE. Father! Don't!

BARTLETT. Leave me be, girl. He believed, didn't he? And ain't he turned traitor—mockin' at me and sayin' it's all a lie—mockin' at himself, too, for bein' a fool to believe in dreams, as he calls 'em.

NAT [*placatingly*]. You're wrong, Father. I do believe.

BARTLETT [*triumphantly*]. Aye, now ye do! Who wouldn't credit their own eyes?

NAT [*mystified*]. Eyes?

BARTLETT. Have ye not seen her, then? Did ye not hear me hail?

NAT [*confusedly*]. Hail? I heard a shout. But—hail what?—seen what?

BARTLETT [*grimly*]. Aye, now's your punishment, Judas. [*Explosively.*] The *Mary Allen,* ye blind fool, come back from the Southern Seas—come back as I swore she must!

SUE [*trying to soothe him*]. Father! Be quiet. It's nothing.

BARTLETT [*not heeding her—his eyes fixed hypnotically on his son's*]. Turned the pint a half-hour back—the *Mary Allen*—loaded with gold as I swore she would be—carryin' her lowers—not a reef in 'em—makin' port, boy, as I swore she must—too late for traitors, boy, too late!—droppin' her anchor just when I hailed her.

NAT [*a haunted, fascinated look in his eyes, which are fixed immovably on his father's*]. The *Mary Allen!* But how do you know?

BARTLETT. Not know my own ship! 'Tis you're mad!

NAT. But at night—some other schooner—

BARTLETT. No other, I say! The *Mary Allen*—clear in the moonlight. And heed this: D'you call to mind the signal I gave to Silas Horne if he made this port o' a night?

NAT [*slowly*]. A red and a green light at the mainmast-head.

BARTLETT [*triumphantly*]. Then look out if ye dare! [*He goes to the porthole, left forward.*] Ye can see it plain from here. [*Commandingly.*] Will ye believe your eyes? Look—and then call me mad! [NAT *peers through the port-*

hole and starts back, a dumbfounded expression on his face.]

NAT [*slowly*]. A red and a green light at the mainmast-head. Yes—clear as day.

SUE [*with a worried look at him*]. Let me see. [*She goes to the porthole.*]

BARTLETT [*to his son with fierce satisfaction*]. Aye, ye see now clear enough—too late for you. [NAT *stares at him spell-bound.*] And from above I saw Horne and Cates and Jimmy Kanaka plain on the deck in the moonlight lookin' up at me. Come! [*He strides to the companionway, followed by* NAT. *The two of them ascend.* SUE *turns from the porthole, an expression of frightened bewilderment on her face. She shakes her head sadly. A loud "Mary Allen, ahoy!" comes from above in* BARTLETT'S *voice, followed like an echo by the same hail from* NAT. SUE *covers her face with her hands, shuddering.* NAT *comes down the companionway, his eyes wild and exulting.*]

SUE [*brokenly*]. He's bad tonight, Nat. You're right to humor him. It's the best thing.

NAT [*savagely*]. Humor him? What in hell do you mean?

SUE [*pointing to the porthole*]. There's nothing there, Nat. There's not a ship in harbor.

NAT. You're a fool—or blind! The *Mary Allen's* there in plain sight of any one, with the red and the green signal lights. Those fools lied about her being wrecked. And I've been a fool, too.

SUE. But, Nat, there's nothing. [*She goes over to the porthole again.*] Not a ship. See.

NAT. I saw, I tell you! From above it's all plain. [*He turns from her and goes back to his seat by the table.* SUE *follows him, pleading frightenedly.*]

SUE. Nat! You mustn't let this— You're all excited and trembling, Nat. [*She puts a soothing hand on his forehead.*]

NAT [*pushing her away from him roughly*]. You blind fool! [BARTLETT *comes down the steps of the companionway. His face is transfigured with the ecstasy of a dream come true.*]

BARTLETT. They've lowered a boat—the three—Horne and

Cates and Jimmy Kanaka. They're a-rowin' ashore. I heard the oars in the locks. Listen! [*A pause.*]

NAT [*excitedly*]. I hear!

SUE [*who has taken the chair by her brother—in a warning whisper*]. It's the wind and sea you hear, Nat. Please!

BARTLETT [*suddenly*]. Hark! They've landed. They're back on earth again as I swore they'd come back. They'll be a-comin' up the path now. [*He stands in an attitude of rigid attention.* NAT *strains forward in his chair. The sound of the wind and sea suddenly ceases and there is a heavy silence. A dense green glow floods slowly in rhythmic waves like a liquid into the room—as of great depths of the sea faintly penetrated by light.*]

NAT [*catching at his sister's hand—chokingly*]. See how the light changes! Green and gold! [*He shivers.*] Deep under the sea! I've been drowned for years! [*Hysterically.*] Save me! Save me!

SUE [*patting his hand comfortingly*]. Only the moonlight, Nat. It hasn't changed. Be quiet, dear, it's nothing. [*The green light grows deeper and deeper.*]

BARTLETT [*in a crooning, monotonous tone*]. They move slowly—slowly. They're heavy, I know, heavy—the two chests. Hark! They're below at the door. You hear?

NAT [*starting to his feet*]. I hear! I left the door open.

BARTLETT. For them?

NAT. For them.

SUE [*shuddering*]. Ssshh! [*The sound of a door being heavily slammed is heard from way down in the house.*]

NAT [*to his sister—excitedly*]. There! You hear?

SUE. A shutter in the wind.

NAT. There is no wind.

BARTLETT. Up they come! Up, bullies! They're heavy—heavy! [*The padding of bare feet sounds from the floor below—then comes up the stairs.*]

NAT. You hear them now?

SUE. Only the rats running about. It's nothing, Nat.

BARTLETT [*rushing to the door and throwing it open*]. Come

in, lads, come in!—and welcome home! [*The forms of* SILAS HORNE, CATES, *and* JIMMY KANAKA *rise noiselessly into the room from the stairs. The last two carry heavy inlaid chests.* HORNE *is a parrot-nosed, angular old man dressed in gray cotton trousers and a singlet torn open across his hairy chest.* JIMMY *is a tall, sinewy, bronzed young Kanaka. He wears only a breech cloth.* CATES *is squat and stout and is dressed in dungaree pants and a shredded white sailor's blouse, stained with iron rust. All are in their bare feet. Water drips from their soaked and rotten clothes. Their hair is matted, intertwined with slimy strands of seaweed. Their eyes, as they glide silently into the room, stare frightfully wide at nothing. Their flesh in the green light has the suggestion of decomposition. Their bodies sway limply, nervelessly, rhythmically as if to the pulse of long swells of the deep sea.*]

NAT [*making a step toward them*]. See! [*Frenziedly.*] Welcome home, boys!

SUE [*grabbing his arm*]. Sit down, Nat. It's nothing. There's no one there. Father—sit down!

BARTLETT [*grinning at the three and putting his finger to his lips*]. Not here, boys, not here—not before him. [*He points to his son.*] He has no right, now. Come. The treasure is ours only. We'll go away with it together. Come. [*He goes to the companionway. The three follow. At the foot of it* HORNE *puts a swaying hand on his shoulder and with the other holds out a piece of paper to him.* BARTLETT *takes it and chuckles exultantly.*] That's right—for him—that's right! [*He ascends. The figures sway up after him.*]

NAT [*frenziedly*]. Wait! [*He struggles toward the companionway.*]

SUE [*trying to hold him back*]. Nat—don't! Father—come back!

NAT. Father! [*He flings her away from him and rushes up the companionway. He pounds against the slide, which seems to have been shut down on him.*]

SUE [*hysterically—runs wildly to the door in rear*]. Help!

Help! [*As she gets to the door* DOCTOR HIGGINS *appears, hurrying up the stairs.*]

HIGGINS [*excitedly*]. Just a moment, Miss. What's the matter?

SUE [*with a gasp*]. My father—up there!

HIGGINS. I can't see—where's my flash? Ah. [*He flashes it on her terror-stricken face, then quickly around the room. The green glow disappears. The wind and sea are heard again. Clear moonlight floods through the portholes.* HIGGINS *springs to the companionway.* NAT *is still pounding.*] Here, Bartlett. Let me try.

NAT [*coming down—looking dully at the doctor*]. They've locked it. I can't get up.

HIGGINS [*looks up—in an astonished voice*]. What's the matter, Bartlett? It's all open. [*He starts to ascend.*]

NAT [*in a voice of warning*]. Look out, man! Look out for them!

HIGGINS [*calls down from above*]. Them? Who? There's no one here. [*Suddenly—in alarm.*] Come up! Lend a hand here! He's fainted! [NAT *goes up slowly.* SUE *goes over and lights the lantern, then hurries back to the foot of the companionway with it. There is a scuffling noise from above. They reappear, carrying* CAPTAIN BARTLETT'S *body.*]

HIGGINS. Easy now! [*They lay him on the couch in rear.* SUE *sets the lantern down by the couch.* HIGGINS *bends and listens for a heartbeat. Then he rises, shaking his head.*] I'm sorry—

SUE [*dully*]. Dead?

HIGGINS [*nodding*]. Heart failure, I should judge. [*With an attempt at consolation.*] Perhaps it's better so, if—

NAT [*as if in a trance*]. There was something Horne handed him. Did you see?

SUE [*wringing her hands*]. Oh, Nat, be still! He's dead. [*To* HIGGINS *with pitiful appeal.*] Please go—go—

HIGGINS. There's nothing I can do?

SUE. Go—please— [HIGGINS *bows stiffly and goes out.*

NAT *moves slowly to his father's body, as if attracted by some irresistible fascination.*]

NAT. Didn't you see? Horne handed him something.

SUE [*sobbing*]. Nat! Nat! Come away! Don't touch him, Nat! Come away. [*But her brother does not heed her. His gaze is fixed on his father's right hand, which hangs downward over the side of the couch. He pounces on it and, forcing the clenched fingers open with a great effort, secures a crumpled ball of paper.*]

NAT [*flourishing it above his head with a shout of triumph*]. See! [*He bends down and spreads it out in the light of the lantern.*] The map of the island! Look! It isn't lost for me after all! There's still a chance—*my* chance! [*With mad, solemn decision.*] When the house is sold I'll go—and I'll find it! Look! It's written here in his handwriting: "The treasure is buried where the cross is made."

SUE [*covering her face with her hands—brokenly*]. Oh, God! Come away, Nat! Come away!

[CURTAIN.]

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* For high school reference.

A WAY OUT [1]

By

ROBERT FROST

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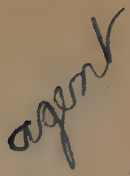

INTRODUCTION

A WAY OUT

No poet, it seems, ever was so like himself, so original, as the smooth saying goes, as Robert Frost. No poet ever made poetry so close a transcript of the sights, sounds, and meanings of common life in a remote community—not Wordsworth, not Whittier. Wordsworth caught the surface significance and reproduced the idiom with self-conscious airs. Whittier took in the picture: he saw, but his ear lost the natural cadences of folk speech. Neither did he possess the psychological gift of divination. Analysis of what lay back of rural types of behavior was beyond his powers and purpose. Edwin Arlington Robinson sees and understands. It may be his utter detachment which prevents him from introducing the very vocal timbre of his characters. Robert Frost, writing prose or poetry, makes the speech tunes of New Hampshire a potent element of his art.

A Way Out, a prose play, is no more remarkable in this respect than any one of a dozen of Mr. Frost's dramatic poems. In the poems, with no loss of naturalism, the talking tones of New England play their little tune across the rigidly observed metrical pattern of blank verse. Whether the technique be prose or verse seems unimportant. In Frost's unique prose play or in his numerous poetic monologues and dialogues, the sounds of the unsophisticated speech of rural New Hampshire are audible and heighten the stark drama of commonplace experience.

When John Coolidge, father of the President of the United States, died, national attention was for the moment concentrated on the kind of countryside which is at once the background, the protagonist, the incentive moment, the crisis, and the solution of Robert Frost's dramas. Such an editorial as appeared in *The World* of March 20, 1926, bears, in its terms, on the material in which Robert Frost works and on the quality of his own personality.

"Long ago it used to be asked," so the editorial proceeded, "what they could raise on the rocky soil of New Hampshire and Vermont, with their long winters of deep snow, and the answer was what it is now, 'men.' . . . John Coolidge's plain cottage home with its low-ceiled room where a President was sworn in, and its stove and its oil lamps and its piled snow outside and its neighborliness within, was the fitting dwelling-place of a strong old-time Vermonter. Such men are still a factor to be reckoned with and reckoned upon, in the Republic." Thus a city newspaper plays its part in interpreting to Americans by adoption, to urban Americans, to cosmopolitan Americans, to the denationalized and the internationalized, the quality of Robert Frost's neighbors. And the manifest differences all come to this: speech and speech tunes may be strange, social customs may be alien, climate and physical conditions different, but examination reveals similar causes behind similar human reactions. In Chicago or in Coös county, warped human beings exhibit past experiences strikingly similar in their ultimate effect.

Robert Frost is a New Hampshire man, though his actual place of birth was San Francisco. After spending nine years of his boyhood there, he went East with his mother in 1884. The father, William Prescott Frost, a

newspaper man, had died. Mrs. Frost journeyed with her young son to Lawrence, Massachusetts, to live with her father. In these early days, the poet's mother often read aloud to her son. Amy Lowell tells us that he never went through a book till he was fourteen. *Tom Brown's School Days* he especially cherished and forebore to finish it because he couldn't tolerate the idea of the story's being over.

Robert Frost did go to high school and did spend some time at college, first a few months at Dartmouth and later two years at Harvard. Outside of academic institutions, his education was acquired in the course of an irregular succession of experiences as bobbin-boy in a Lawrence mill, as worker in a shoe factory, as editor of a country newspaper, as farmer, as teacher of English and instructor in psychology. But Mr. Frost's personality and his works are evidence that what counted most in his making was what has been called so gravely and so beautifully "the education of nature." The floating clouds have lent him their state, the birches have bent for him, "the motions of the storm" have moulded him; he has leaned his ear in many a secret place

> Where rivulets dance their wayward round,
> And beauty born of murmuring sound

has played its part in the sensitizing process.

In 1894 appeared Robert Frost's first published verse in *The Independent,* and nineteen years later, his first volume of poems was brought out in London by an appreciative English publisher: this was *A Boy's Will.* The next year, still under the imprint of David Nutt—who deserves to be remembered for this as for many other services to literature—was published *North of Boston.*

Robert Frost was then living in England with his family. In 1912 he had made the move, and he continued his residence there till 1915.

During the stay in England Mr. Frost established his household at Beaconsfield, in Buckinghamshire, the country whose charms are celebrated by Milton so enchantingly in *L'Allegro* and in *Il Penseroso*. Beaconsfield has other delightful literary association. It lies in the same neighborhood as Gray's Stoke Pogis and was once also the home of the lyric poet Waller and the orator Burke. But Milton's special *terrain* has had no apparent influence on Mr. Frost. During this English episode, our New England writer had as neighbors Lascelles Abercrombie and Wilfrid Wilson Gibson. There are certain recognizable affinities between the brief dramatic episodes of the latter and those of Robert Frost.

In March, 1915, when the Great War was nearly a year old, Frost came back to his New England. Since his return two more volumes of his poetry have been published, *Mountain Interval* in 1916 and *New Hampshire* in 1923.

More academic interludes have interrupted his life as "a neighbor of neighbors" among New Hampshire and Vermont folk. From 1916 to 1920 he served as professor of English at Amherst College and since 1921 he has exercised at intervals unique functions as "poet in residence" at the University of Michigan.

Several years ago, the editor of "The Literary Spotlight" in *The Bookman* wrote thus of the author of *A Way Out:* "He is a natural dramatist: he sees things as pictures rather than hears them as music. He has written short plays and intends to write longer ones, which are still slowly germinating."

At an even earlier date, in 1919, Percy MacKaye also

had seen the promise of a playwright in Mr. Frost. "And when may not . . . [Frost]," prophesied Mr. MacKaye, "convene the lonely folk of his back-country regions in strange, touching festivals—that call for fresh incarnations of the trade-worn actor?"

A Way Out was published originally in a magazine, *The Seven Arts,* in 1917. In the categories of one-act plays it would be set down as a "thriller." Both the central situation and the leading characters are gruesome. Charles Cestre, discussing Frost, has generalized thus on his choice of subjects: "Literature has a right to choose significant cases, even with a touch of the pathological in them, provided they keep within the limits of verisimilitude and give only a striking and emphatic presentation of what is in germ in the usual conditions of normal life."

Study of *A Way Out* stimulates further reflection along the same lines of thought. Or, as Amy Lowell phrased it in *A Critical Fable:*

> There's Frost with his blueberry pastures and hills
> All peopled by folk who have so many ills
> 'Tis a business to count 'em, their subtle insanities.

Both Amy Lowell and Louis Untermeyer have compared Robert Frost's dramatic writing to J. M. Synge's. Amy Lowell commented on Mr. Frost's skill in avoiding mere dialect. "It speaks marvellously for the vividness of the poet's [Frost's] work in other ways that it is still personal and particular with this element of local speech left out. What would J. M. Synge's plays be without the Irish idiom he employs?"

Mr. Untermeyer has registered in these words his appreciation of the artistic kinship of Synge to Frost: ". . . Discarding these theatrical accessories, Frost has

taken the drama out into the air; he lets the sunlight play on his Yankee scenes and allows his actors to talk in a language that is rich and living. No one since Synge has put so much of the sharp tang of country life into dramatic poetry."

A Way Out, prose dramatic episode though it is, exhibits most of the outstanding characteristics of Robert Frost's brief poetic dialogues and monologues. Thus the gruesome humor of *The Witch of Coös* is here foreshadowed; the instant and simplified methods of characterization employed in *The Death of the Hired Man* are in evidence here also; and—it cannot be said too often—the same suggestion of speech tunes indigenous to Robert Frost's neighborhood strikes the ear. The spare life of remote farms, the desolation of deserted homesteads, the strained emotions of the Puritan fallen on evil days, the grandeur of great landscape, and the heart-warming comradeship of good neighbors—all these themes are recurrent in whatever form of literary art Robert Frost chooses to employ.

A WAY OUT

CHARACTERS

ASA GORRILL
A STRANGER

SCENE: *A bachelor's kitchen bedroom in a farmhouse with a table spread for supper.*

Someone rattles the door-latch from outside. ASA GORRILL, *in loose slippers, shuffles directly to the door and unbolts it. A stranger opens the door for himself and walks in.*

STRANGER [*after a survey*]. Huh! So this is what it's like. Seems to me you lock up early. What you afraid of?

ASA [*in a piping drawl*]. 'Fraid of nothing, because I ain't got nothing—nothing't anybody wants.

STRANGER. I want some of your supper.

ASA. Have it and welcome if it tempts your appetite. You see what it is.

STRANGER [*after looking*]. What is it?

ASA. Well, it's some scrapings of potatoes and string beans from other meals I was warming over. They've got kind of mixed together.

STRANGER. Should think so. What else you got in the house? What you got in here?

ASA. That door's closed with nails. You can't get in there. This is all the room I live in. Here's the cupboard, if you're looking for it. It's bare.

STRANGER [*knocks over a chair as he goes about*]. Got any bread?

ASA [*trembling*]. I don't know what you mean by coming into a person's house as if you owned it. I never was subject to anything like it. If I had some bread, you don't go the right way about to get any.

STRANGER. Cut that. I'm here for business. You're supposed to be poor then?

ASA [*with dignity*]. I am poor.

STRANGER. Sure there's nothing hidden in the mattress—or in that nailed-up room? Oh, I haven't come to kill you for it. I shan't kill you anyway till I have something to go on. You needn't be scared till you're hurt. I only meant your being poor was part of the job if anybody was going to undertake it.

ASA. See here, it's time you told me what your business is in my house or go out. I don't understand a word you say. I ain't been subject to anything like it all these years since Orin died.

STRANGER. Aw, don't whine to me about it. I've heard of you and your brother keeping old-maid's hall over here in this neck of the woods, patching each other's trousers and doing up each other's back hair. Look ahere, old boy, I ain't going to be a mite harder on you than I have to be for my own good. I was passing this way and in trouble and I just thought I'd look in on you and look you over as a possible way out.

ASA. As to that I don't know. I don't know what I might or mightn't do to help a person that didn't come at me wrong and spoke me civil. I think you can't pass this way very often—who does for the matter of that? I don't remember of ever seeing you before. You know me though?

STRANGER. Better than you know me. I only just came to the shoeshop down at the Falls last winter. But I've heard of you times enough. As a matter of fact I wasn't exactly passing: your reputation brought me somewhat off my road. You popped into my head like an idea.

ASA. I'm going to give you some tea before it gets cold and have some myself to steady me. Another time see to it you make a civiler beginning with anybody you're expecting favors

of. . . . You take it without milk? Brother and I ain't had no cow since the barn burned down in '98. Brother Orin died the year after that.

STRANGER. For God's sake, what do you live on—nothing but potato mash?

ASA. There again! Criticising! I don't see what there is in that to make you take it the way you do. Where does it pinch you? Shall I give you some?

STRANGER [*pausing as he walks back and forth in perplexity*]. Mash! Don't. Is it pretty generally known you live on potato mash?

ASA. Generally known—

STRANGER. I mean, would it excite suspicion if you gave it up and took to eating mince pie, damn it?

ASA. Excite—

STRANGER. Do you ever have bread?

ASA. When I bake, when I happen to have flour in the house.

STRANGER. Where do you get money to buy flour?

ASA. I sell eggs.

STRANGER. Oh, eggs are at the bottom of it. Nothing unless eggs. God, it's worse than I thought, worse than I bargained for after twenty dollars a week and nobody to take care of but myself. But there's one thing I noticed there: you do go into the village shopping now and then when the hens are laying—when there are eggs. It's not just as if you never bought a thing, nor spoke to a soul.

ASA. You ain't pitying me, be you, mister?

STRANGER. Pitying you! No, I'm pitying myself. You like it all and I shan't. Sit down and let me tell you. I can see you haven't heard. As you see me here, I'm—well, I'm in no position to waste pity on anybody else, or think of anybody else and I'm not going to. You can bank on that. I'm running away from a murder I'm accused of having committed. [ASA *drops his face into his hands on the table and groans.*] And I've turned in here to you for help.

ASA. Oh, I can't have anything to do with this. I never have had no trouble and I ain't a-going to begin now. I'm a peaceable man.

STRANGER. I wasn't intending to give you much choice in the business.

ASA. Oh, but you won't drag me into your crime. After all I've done to keep out of things!

STRANGER. It just shows you—

ASA. You want me to hide you here. Think of it!

STRANGER. I haven't quite decided what I want you to do yet. All is, I've done the deed, they're out after me, I've been zigzagging 'cross country (not daring to use the trains) for three days and now I've hit on you as my only salvation. And I'm going to use you one way or another; so you might as well pick your head up off the table and be a man about it—not a wet dishrag. The cuss of it is I was seen at least once today, walked right out of the woods onto a team full of women and hadn't sense enough to keep to the road as if nothing was up, but dodged back into the woods where I came from. That'll tell 'em I haven't got far off. I've got to think quick, but not too quick. No use losing my head.

ASA. I don't see that there's so very much to think of except a hiding place. I'll hide you for tonight. If I must, I must.

STRANGER. Yes, you must, old boy, or I might kill you. It wouldn't amount to another crime to kill a half man like you. Throw you in extra and call it one crime. Does anyone know for certain you're not a woman in man's clothing anyway? . . . But it's not so simple. Tonight's not all I have to consider. There's other nights coming. Where will I be tomorrow night and the night after that? I'll leave it to you if it's not a puzzler.

ASA. Just as fur as you can get from here, I should think.

STRANGER. I don't know that you know, but it's the fashion nowadays to hide just as near the scene of the crime as you can stay.

ASA. Oh, dear, you don't mean you're thinking of fastening

onto me for good and living the rest of your nat'ral life in any concealment I can give you.

STRANGER. Maybe, maybe. I'm out of a good job in the cutting room, anyway. I can't go back there, can I? I'm willing to let you advise me up to any reasonable point. I was thinking how it would be to be you if worst came to worst as it may yet. We might agree to be you turn and turn about, one of us lying up in hiding while the other was out stretching his legs and satisfying the hanker to see folks. The danger there, is that there would be always an extra one around to be discovered. And there are a lot of dangers. It would never do. I should have to trust you too much not to give me away. And we might quarrel as to who had the lion's share of the time out. And then appearing in turn might be almost as risky as side by side. People might be led to see differences that they could only explain on the assumption that you were two instead of one.

ASA. If you're expecting followers, the less noise we make talking the better. What's to hender their being all round the house now and looking in the window? That curtain's no more than a piece of cotton sheet. You can see right through it when the balance of light is on this side from the fire. [*He tucks the sheet in at the edges and corners.*] But say, it comes to me if you could tell me you didn't do this murder—then I shouldn't be doing anything wrong.

STRANGER. I did it fast enough.

ASA. How—how—how— Don't tell me though. I'd best not hear. Do you mean by the cutting room the place where you done it?

STRANGER. Queer codger, aren't you?

ASA. Guess I am.

STRANGER. Say, I've been getting it through my head you must have been the one meant by that hermit article in one of the Boston papers here awhile back—before I came to the Falls. Recollect anyone's calling on you with a pencil and a piece of paper held out in front of him so-fashion? Or did he write you up from a safe distance the way Whoses did the

North Pole? Great talk he put in your mouth about hermiting—if you were the one. Let's see, what did he say was the matter with you?—crossed in love?

ASA. You've heard that, most like.

STRANGER. I've heard something.

ASA. No, it was Orin that was crossed in love in a manner of speaking. He was promised to a gal who kept him waiting more than fifteen years and then married someone else because she wouldn't come to live in this house till he divided the property with me or bought me out and got rid of me. Orin stood by me; so I stood by him.

STRANGER. You haven't got any real prejudices in favor of this way of living then? I mean you didn't take it up as a man goes into the Methodist Church in preference to the Baptist or the Orthodox?

ASA. Dunno's I did.

STRANGER. What I'm trying to get at is how you look at things—if you look at them.

ASA. As f'r instance?

STRANGER. Well, what do you say about women when they come up in conversation? Supposed to hate 'em?

ASA. I so seldom have occasion to speak of 'em.

STRANGER. Then what do you do when you see 'em? Run? Same as I did today from that carriage-load of 'em.

ASA. Don't know's I run exactly. I'd a leetle rather not meet 'em face to face.

STRANGER. All right, we've got that then. Think the world's a bad place and all that nonsense?

ASA. Sholy it ain't any better'n it ought to be, what with all the killing and the murdering and the whatnot. Now is it? Come.

STRANGER. I was reading where a man living on a farm back like this had a queer religion about inhaling from your own shoes when you took them off to go to bed so's to get back the strength lost by settling in the daytime. And there was something about not having the cow calf when the sun was "in his legs." "Awlmanick" expression—"in his legs."

Ain't that right? You see I'm up on some of this already. There were three cities the man could see throwing light on the sky at night, which, being a God-fearing man, he called "the cities of the plain." According to him they kept getting brighter and brighter attempting like to turn night into day in the face of nature. You could judge how the Lord took it from the way the thunder storms kept increasing in number and destructiveness owing to the attraction of the electricity and the wiring. Stood to reason. Anyway the old man expected nothing but that some night the Lord would fetch up a storm that would wipe out those cities in a blue blaze.

ASA. Wasn't it awful!

STRANGER. It hasn't happened yet. I suppose you've a notion or two like that. But *you* wouldn't know it if you had.

ASA. I don't hold with no such doctrine as that of inhaling from your own shoes, certain.

STRANGER. Ever been heard to say you like the innocent woods and fields and flowers like a poem in print?

ASA. Dunno's I have.

STRANGER. I guess it's just a case of plain damn fool; which ought not to be hard to give an imitation of. I supposed people that lived alone had to have something to say for themselves. But that's what comes of my being all bothered up with literary reading. You haven't got ideas enough to make a hermit's life interesting. And the reporter lied when he said you had. I'll bet he never came nearer than five miles of you. Afraid you'd spoil the story if he came too near. But what gets me is what you say to people in self-defense, the ministers for instance, when they tell you you've no right to keep yourself to yourself the way you do. How do you fend 'em off?

ASA. It's so long since I was bothered by anybody I've most forgotten.

STRANGER. I bet you have.

ASA. Orin knew how to send 'em about their business.

STRANGER. Orin by the side of you must have been some-

one. . . . I guess if I can get the outside appearances right—Oh, one thing more: Neighbor with anyone?

ASA. No, as you may say, no.

STRANGER. Write any letters?—And your handwriting! I'll be sure to forget something in all this rush. Got a pencil? Here's a stub. On that pasteboard box cover. Anywhere. Just your name. Write it two or three times—will you?—as long as it don't cost any more. What—what's that? Asie Gorrill. So it was: seems to me I remember it was Asie. [*After a considering pause, he goes to the window, draws aside the curtain, and looks out.*] Those your pine woods?

ASA. It ain't right, mister, examining into me further and further. You ain't got time to plague me so—not if you're going to save your own skin—not if you're what you are by your own telling.

STRANGER. Never you mind me. You're rich, you old skivins. You own all that timber, and you won't touch it. Pretending to be poor! You're just as two-faced as the next man. I knew I could get something against you to work me up if I tried hard enough. Who are you saving the woods for? Any heirs? Me?

ASA. What does that mean?

STRANGER. It means I ought to kill you and skip the country with it under my arm.

ASA. I shouldn't think you'd feel [*he gulps aloud*] as much like joking as you appear to. Hee, hee.

STRANGER. Asie, I believe you're a bad lot and entitled to no more consideration than any other grown-up man. . . . About my age, though. About my build. All I'd have to do is cave in a little, slump—let my mouth and eyes hang open. Say, push the table back and walk up and down the way you've seen me doing. Them's orders. I'm not inviting you. Do it! . . . I'll thank you for what you have on your feet—slippers is it? How do I know they aren't some I made? Make you a present of my shoes.

ASA. Oh, I shan't need 'em. I mostly go barefoot anyway. I only slipped these on to haul wood.

STRANGER. Oh, wood. How do you haul wood? Wheelbarrow?

ASA. No, I drag it in, in poles two at a time, one under each arm. I take what's died standing—

STRANGER [*going to a bed-post*]. What's all this? Extra togs? Jumper? [*Comparing it with what Asa has on.*] Overalls? [*Comparing.*] Watch me! [*Putting on jumper and overalls.*] Light a light, why don't you?

ASA. Oh, I don't allow myself no lamp! I'll throw the stove door open. I can put on some more wood. It's about my bedtime anyway.

STRANGER. I'm putting you to bed tonight. I'm going to let you stay up later than usual on account of company. Now watch me. [*He takes a turn up and down the room.* ASA *stumbles getting out of his way.*] No trouble about the thin voice. [*He speaks more or less in Asa's piping drawl from here on.*] Now I want you should let me show you something that'll amuse and maybe bother you. I'm going to mix us up like your potato and string beans, and then see if even you can tell us apart. The way I propose to do is to take both your hands like this and then whirl round and round with you till we're both so dizzy we'll fall down when we let go. Don't you resist or holler! I ain't a-going to hurt ye—*yet.* Only I've got to get up some sort of excitement to make it easier for both of us. And then when we're down, I want you should wait till you can see straight before you speak and try to tell which is which and which is t'other. Wait some time.

ASA. Let go of me. I know what you be; you're a crazy man from a madhouse.

STRANGER. You'd best humor me then. [*He lifts* ASA's *hands still higher and stands looking at him. The fire burns brighter and lights them unevenly.*] Old boy!

ASA. What is it?

STRANGER. I'm thinking—

ASA. What?

STRANGER. Old boy, are you happy?

ASA. Oh!

STRANGER. Are you happy? Have you anything to live for? Lord, didn't you ever ask yourself a question like that—with so much time on your hands? I ought not to expect it of you. It will take me to do this thing right when I come into office. Oh, well.

ASA [*looking wildly behind him toward the door*]. I wouldn't have believed it.

STRANGER. What was I telling you! It just shows that if you won't go to life, why life will come to you. I should think a man in your position would have to think such thoughts. I know I should. And you would if you'd ever read so much as a Sunday paper to set you going on them. But I mustn't be any longer with you. Come! One, two, three, swing! Swing, damn you! Don't hold back. Faster! . . . Faster! [ASA *moans as he circles. The* STRANGER *moans too. The slippers fly off his feet. After some time they break apart and go to the floor, where they lie, both moaning.*]

FIRST TO SPEAK. I know. I ain't lost track. It's you that done the crime!

SECOND [*screaming*]. It's not! [*He half rises and falls back.*]

FIRST. It is! And I'm not afraid of you any more. You've got to go. God will give me strength to wrastle with a rascal. [*The* SECOND *snarls, throws himself backward, and faints. The* FIRST *strikes him a blow with his fist on the head and drags him across the floor and out of the house. The room is left empty for some time. . . . A loud knock. Another. The door is thrown open. Heads appear in the doorway.*]

A VOICE. Gone to bed, Asie? His fire's lit. He can't be far off. Here he is now. [*The* HERMIT *pushes in past them, breathless, and faces them from the table.*] We're after a man, Asie. You haven't seen him?

ASA. Ain't I, though? He's been and gone.

A VOICE. How long since? Which way?

ASA. Not five minutes. Through the woods. He was dragging me off to kill when he heard you coming and run. I was going to follow, but I gave it up and came back. What's he been up to?

A VOICE. You're no good, Asie.

ANOTHER VOICE. What had you done to him to get him against you?

ASA. You'd better hurry. [*He beats the table with his fist.*]

A VOICE. Someone had better be not too far off so as to take care of Asie. [*They confer, gradually closing the door. The minute they are gone the* HERMIT *snatches the socks off his feet and throws them into the fire. He picks up the pair of shoes on the floor and sends them the same way. He bolts the door softly. He stands listening.*]

SOMEONE [*later, as if repassing, sings out*]. Good-night, Asie!

THE HERMIT [*getting into bed so as to answer with his face in the pillow*]. Good-night.

[CURTAIN.]

BOOKS AND ARTICLES HELPFUL IN THE STUDY OF "A WAY OUT"

* P. H. Boynton: "Robert Frost," *The English Journal,* Vol. XI, pp. 455-462. Chicago, 1922.

Charles Cestre: "Amy Lowell, Robert Frost and Edwin Arlington Robinson," *The Johns Hopkins Alumni Magazine,* Vol. XIV, pp. 363-388. Baltimore, 1926.

* H. W. Cook: *Our Poets of Today.* New York, 1919.

G. R. Elliott: "The Neighborliness of Robert Frost," *The Nation,* Vol. CIX, pp. 713-715. New York, 1919.

Albert Feuillerat: "Poètes Américains d'Aujourd'hui: M. Robert Frost," *Revue des Deux Mondes.* Vol. XVII, pp. 185-210. Paris, 1923.

John Freeman: "Robert Frost," *The London Mercury,* Vol. XIII, pp. 176-187. London, 1925.

Edward Garnett: *Friday Nights* [First Series]. New York, 1922.

Llewellyn Jones: *First Impressions.* New York, 1925.

* "The Literary Spotlight: Robert Frost," *The Bookman,* Vol. LVII, pp. 304-308. New York, 1923.

Amy Lowell: *A Critical Fable.* Boston and New York, 1922.

Tendencies in Modern American Poetry. Boston and New York. [1917.]

* Louis Untermeyer: *American Poetry Since 1900.* New York, 1923.

Carl Van Doren: "The Soil of the Puritans—Robert Frost—Quintessence and Subsoil," *The Century Magazine,* Vol. CV, pp. 629-636. New York, 1923.

* Carl and Mark Van Doren: *American and British Literature Since 1890.* New York and London. [1925.]

* Clement Wood: *Poets of America.* New York [1925].

* For high school reference.

STUDY QUESTIONS ON THE PLAYS

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THE NIGHT OF "MR. H."

1. Discuss the differences between early nineteenth-century theatres and present-day ones.

2. What is the commonly accepted distinction between farce and comedy?

3. Which of the *Essays of Elia* has Mr. Brighouse utilized in his play?

4. Why, probably, was Lamb so fond of playgoing and the drama?

5. Read at least one of Mr. Brighouse's longer plays and compare his workmanship in it with his technique in this one-act play.

6. Construct a small model for the setting of *The Night of "Mr. H."* What mood should the lighting suggest?

7. Make a parallel study of Alice Brown's *Charles Lamb* and Mr. Brighouse's play.

8. What other men of letters would furnish good material for biographical plays?

9. Why did Charles Lamb fail as a playwright?

10. What do you guess to be Mr. Brighouse's purpose in writing this play?

11. What was Lamb's greatest service to English drama?

12. In *The Night of "Mr. H."* is the reader interested primarily in (a) incident, (b) character, (c) literary association, (d) atmosphere?

13. Make a scrapbook illustrating allusions to books, people, places, and social life in *The Night of "Mr. H."*

THE LAST OF THE LOWRIES

1. What is a Croatan? Consult *The Encyclopedia Americana.*

2. What are some of the aspects of life in North Carolina

in the historic past and at the present time that have furnished dramatic material to Paul Green? Examine his volume *The Lord's Will.*

3. Show by means of some simple diagram the parallel incidents in Synge's *Riders to the Sea* (see Cohen's *One-Act Plays by Modern Authors*) and Green's *The Last of the Lowries.* What takes the place in Green's play of the power of the sea?

4. Make a list of the dialect words in the play and write their meanings.

5. Which of the characters stands out most clearly?

6. Is Mayno the wife of one of the dead outlaws or of Henry Berry?

7. What characteristics of folk drama has this play?

8. What moment in the play do you consider the turning point?

9. Are there any local traditions in your neighborhood that could be utilized for dramatic purposes?

10. What are the titles of some of the collections of traditional English ballads surviving in various Southern states?

11. How might the principle of contrast be applied in the production of *The Last of the Lowries?*

12. Give other examples of the literature of outlawry; e.g., in the Bible, in ballads, in Shakespeare.

13. Make a list of recent plays the scene of which is laid in remote corners of the South. Hatcher Hughes, Lulu Vollmer, and Percy MacKaye are the authors suggested for investigation.

14. Write a review of Paul Green's *The Lord's Will.*

15. What conviction underlies Professor Koch's life work?

16. How does Professor Koch teach people to write plays?

17. What can country communities learn from Professor Koch's work?

18. What are the functions of the Bureau of Community Drama at the University of North Carolina? To answer this question it will be necessary to consult *Carolina Folk-Plays* (Second Series). Edited with an Introduction on *Making a Folk Theater* by Frederick H. Koch, New York, 1924.

HEARTS ENDURING

1. Summarize and discuss the ideas contained in the playwright's "Note."

2. What, according to John Erskine, distinguishes dramatic from lyric material?

3. Is there any similarity between the theme of *Hearts Enduring* and that of "*Noblesse Oblige*"?

4. Do you connect Mr. Erskine's interest in a mediæval setting with other literary projects on which he was engaged at about the same time?

5. What suggestions of "antecedent material" are there in this play?

6. What character faults do you find in the two personages of this play?

7. Which of Shakespeare's sonnets illustrates, in its exalted beauty of theme and expression, the underlying idea of *Hearts Enduring?*

8. What are the most interesting circumstances of Mr. Erskine's life?

9. What help in your own writing does this statement of Mr. Erskine's furnish you?—

> "To know what can be said in words, and what effect it will have on your readers, is the inward art of writing, and more important even than the management of a sentence or the shaping of a paragraph."

10. What might be the dominant color in a stage production of *Hearts Enduring?* What light-plot would be most effective?

11. Make a list of themes suitable for dramatic treatment in a two-character one-act play.

12. Write the words and the music for a song to be sung off-stage during a performance of this play.

PEARLS

1. What value has the title of this play?

2. If you were to turn *Pearls* into a short-story, whose work would it suggest?

3. What does the speech employed by the characters contribute to the total dramatic effect?

4. What are the touches used to heighten suspense?

5. Sketch the plot for a short play of school life which should parallel the central situation in *Pearls*.

6. What does Mr. Totheroh mean by "plays of the soil"?

7. What other playwrights owe their experience and their opportunities to the "Little Theatre"?

8. How does pageant technique differ from play technique? (See M. P. Beegle and J. R. Crawford, *Community Drama and Pageantry*, New Haven, 1916.)

9. What is George Jean Nathan's rôle in contemporary dramatic criticism?

10. Read Totheroh's *Wild Birds*, and compare it with Masefield's *The Tragedy of Nan*.

THE DEAR DEPARTED

1. What is the distinction between the ordinary stock company and the repertory theatre?

2. What British playwrights are associated with the repertory movement?

3. What is meant by the "Manchester School" of playwrights?

4. In what ideas was Houghton most interested?

5. Describe Houghton's method of writing a play?

6. What famous English comedy of the seventeenth century turns on an episode of sham death and the greed of heirs?

7. On what was Houghton's familiarity with dramatic technique based?

8. How has Houghton differentiated Mrs. Slater and Mrs. Jordan?

9. At what point in the play is the suspense greatest?

10. Compare *The Dear Departed* with Houghton's *The*

Younger Generation. What is the difference in tone and intention?

11. Plan and work up a scene between Abel and the hostess of the *Ring-o'-Bells.*

12. Compare Houghton's stage directions with Robert Frost's or Christopher Morley's. In what respects do they differ; or in what respects do they resemble one another?

13. Draw a diagram, a ground plan, for the scene of this play.

14. What general policies should you suggest to the director of this play? Advise him in regard to make-up, costume, *tempo,* accent, lighting, setting, and interpretation.

THE POOR HOUSE

1. Read Alice Brown's *Joint Owners in Spain* and Lady Gregory's *The Workhouse Ward.* What light do these plays throw on Hattie Mason's future?

2. How does Miss Driscoll contrive to introduce "business" that heightens the interest of the dialogue?

3. What has been Miss Driscoll's preparation for writing a play, the scene of which is laid in a rural community in New York State?

4. In your community what provision is made for the aged and indigent? Do these provisions suggest any situations for a one-act play?

5. How many lines of interest are there in *The Poor House?* If it were required to adapt this play for the screen, what change should you make in the story in the way of additional characters and episodes?

6. What advantages has this play for amateur production?

7. What American writers of the short-story utilize similar character types?

8. Do the characters in this play reveal themselves or are they developed?

9. Reconstruct a conversation between Lannie Frear and Hattie Mason in the "poor house." Decide whether irony, humor, or pathos is to predominate.

10. What opportunities does this play offer to a skilful director?

THE SIEGE

1. Discuss the comedy of masks on the modern stage. See introductions to *The Maker of Dreams* and *The Pierrot of the Minute* in *One-Act Plays by Modern Authors*. Make a list of such of Clements's plays as employ characters of the harlequinade.

2. List plays by Colin Campbell Clements which employ oriental atmosphere.

3. Enumerate the methods by means of which a director can suggest this atmosphere.

4. What method does Clements use to indicate that the characters in *The Siege* speak an oriental language?

5. *The Siege* is based on an actual occurrence in Turkey in 1919. What was the political and historical background in that year?

6. Of what events does the catastrophe at the end of the play consist?

7. Are all the characters in this play individualized?

8. What means are used to foreshadow the tragic ending?

9. What is the significance of the reference to "Ramadan"?

10. Plan a one-act play paralleling the situation in *The Siege*, the scene of which is laid at the time of the Crusades. Use a French troubadour as the hero.

THE CHANGE-HOUSE

1. What is the historic background of this play?

2. Which of Scott's, of Stevenson's, or of Thackeray's novels deals with the same period?

3. What poetic touches in the dialogue are especially appealing?

4. Is *The Change-House* satisfactory as a one-act play?

5. Experiment with the plot, setting, and characters of this

play as material for a ballad in the traditional form. Make the necessary modifications.

6. How have the Hebrides figured previously in English literature?

7. With what other plays are you familiar in which a blood feud separates two lovers?

8. Examine Samuel Johnson's *Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* and James Boswell's *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* for illustrations of the social conditions described in *The Change-House.*

9. Why would the lighting of this play be an especially important factor in its production?

10. Compare the work of the Scottish National Theatre with that of the Abbey Theatre. (See Introduction to *One-Act Plays by Modern Authors.*) These topics are suggested: (a) the history of each organization, (b) the playwrights associated with the respective enterprises, (c) the tendencies common to both movements.

THE LITTLE FATHER OF THE WILDERNESS

1. Make a study of the furniture, costumes, and other properties appropriate to the period of Louis XV.

2. How is the principle of contrast applied in the construction of this play?

3. Is the alliance between Frontenac and the Jesuits historical?

4. Why is *The Little Father of the Wilderness* effective in the theatre?

5. To what tribe would the Indian allies of the French probably belong?

6. Of what value are the *Jesuit Relations* in the study of the North American Indian? Can you find other dramatic themes and characters in Miss Kenton's volumes?

7. Consider the problem of collaboration in connection with Lloyd Osbourne and Robert Louis Stevenson, or in connection with Lloyd Osbourne and Austin Strong.

8. How is the antecedent material conveyed in this play?

9. What touches suggest the atmosphere of France and the language in which the characters are supposed to speak?

10. Who might well be the historical prototype of Père Marlotte?

11. At what point in this play is the interest most intense?

12. What other well known one-act plays deal with the old régime in France?

13. What circumstances of Lloyd Osbourne's life familiarized him with French local color?

14. What should be the character of the incidental music played?

THE ARTIST

1. What is the special quality of this play?

2. What is the significance of the title?

3. At what point in the play is a serious note introduced? Does the speech truly represent the speaker's real motives?

4. Does the repetition of the undelivered letter device prove monotonous or satisfying?

5. Can you suggest how a second line of interest might be developed in order to make *The Artist* available for motion picture purposes?

6. Compare *The Artist* with any one of the plays in Barrie's *Half Hours*. Use as your bases for judgment: (a) character substance, and (b) logic of situation.

7. Try turning the play into the kind of verse in which Austin Dobson's dialogue *Tu Quoque* is written.

8. What " business " should you suggest, to give added interest to the lines?

9. Plan the ideal setting for a cottage like Matheson's. What touches should you add to give more definite characterization to the absent owner?

10. Would the play have gained dramatically had Matheson been introduced into the action?

11. How does Milne get his humorous effects in *The Artist?* Compare the humor with Milne's sketches published originally

in *Punch* and now collected in such volumes as *The Sunny Side, If I May,* and *The Play Day.*

12. Milne, as a playwright, has two approaches to life, the one illustrated in *The Romantic Age,* the other in *The Truth About Blayds.* In which vein is *The Artist* written?

13. Is there dramatic material in *Winnie-the-Pooh* and in *When We Were Very Young?* How could such material be handled? Compare Milne's method in *Make-Believe.*

14. What relation do sketches like *The Rabbits* or *Oranges and Lemons* bear to Milne's plays?

15. Compare Milne's attitude toward society with that of any other playwright represented in this volume.

16. To what line in the development of English comedy does Milne belong?

GOOD THEATRE

1. What is the meaning of the phrase " Good Theatre " in current play reviewing? (See Introduction to *The Night of " Mr. H."*)

2. What light does this satire of Morley's throw on his opinion of the Shakespeare-Bacon controversy?

3. What theatrical fashions of Shakespeare's own day are illustrated in *As You Like It?*

4. Has the dramatized novel any vogue today? Illustrate.

5. From your knowledge of Christopher Morley's personality, habits, and *habitat,* why should you be led to believe that the setting and mood of *As You Like It* would be especially congenial to him?

6. What is the theme of Morley's play *Good Theatre?*

7. What is the significance of the action's taking place on Hallowe'en?

8. Why were the London theatres of Shakespeare's day situated on the Bankside?

9. Place the allusion, " comical-tragical-historical-pastoral." Use a Shakespeare concordance.

10. In what lines does Christopher Morley express the delight that an author takes in the growth of his fiction?

11. Make a little lexicon explaining the Elizabethan expressions that are introduced.

12. Make a corresponding dictionary of the current slang that is used.

13. Look up in the text of *Doctor Faustus* the quotation from Christopher Marlowe to which Morley refers.

14. At what theatre in London was *As You Like It* probably first given?

15. Make a study of Morley's other one-act plays.

16. From what works of Morley's could you piece together an autobiography?

17. How would you explain the tone and temper of his writing?

18. Who are his favorite authors? How have they influenced him?

19. Is it common to find the essentials of a Shakespearian plot reproduced in modern plays? Illustrate.

CARVED WOMAN

1. Relate several versions of Indian legends on the Orpheus and Eurydice theme.

2. With what references in English literature to the story of Orpheus and Eurydice are you familiar? Make your own anthology of such passages.

3. What is the significance of the widespread contemporary interest in primitive cultures?

4. Write a report on Indian music. Give especial attention to the use of the drum. (Consult the reports of the Smithsonian Institution; authorities on the subject are Natalie Curtis Burlin, Alice Fletcher, and Frances Densmore.)

5. What are the story elements common to the several Indian versions of the Orpheus and Eurydice myth and to the cognate Greek legend?

6. In what Greek story does the statue of a woman come to life?

7. What American authors are especially concerned with an interpretation of the arts of the American Indian?

8. Summarize the directions for staging given on pages 11 to 16 of Alexander's *Manito Masks.*

9. What is the usual relationship between ritual and myth? (Consult J. E. Harrison's *Ancient Art and Ritual.*)

10. What are the salient characteristics of Indian poems and rituals? (Look up this subject in Mary Austin's *The American Rhythm.*)

11. How does Professor Alexander describe the motions of Indian dancers? (See *For an Indian Theatre.*)

12. Write an Indian play after the model of *Carved Woman.* Use any of the story material in *Wigwam Evenings* or in *Children of the Twilight.*

WHERE THE CROSS IS MADE

1. With what events outside the play is it necessary to be familiar in order to understand the course of the action?

2. What reason does Nat give the doctor for wishing to have his father put away in the asylum? What reason does Nat give his sister? What is the real basis for Nat's plan?

3. Does Nat's attitude toward the " treasure " change in the course of the play? Why?

4. At what point in the play is the exposition completed?

5. What part does the mortgage play in the plot?

6. What is the source of Nat's bitterness?

7. At what point in the action does Nat become insane?

8. How does Eugene O'Neill expect the audience to be affected by the " dense green glow " of light and the appearance of the seamen with the chest?

9. At what point in the play is the audience supposed to be released from the delusions shared by Captain Bartlett and Nat?

10. At the close of the play what does the future seem to hold for Sue?

11. What is the " dominant motive " of the various characters in *Where the Cross Is Made?*

12. What successive emotions does the play arouse in the audience?

13. Explain Thomas H. Dickinson's comment (in *Playwrights of the New American Theatre*) on *Gold:* "The play displays as well that sardonic irony, that distrust of all the pretensions of man that are characteristic of the author's temper."

14. Compare the relation between John Brandane's *The Change-House* and *The Lifting* and that between Eugene O'Neill's *Where the Cross Is Made* and *Gold.*

15. After studying O'Neill's *In the Zone, Ile, Bound East for Cardiff,* and the play in the present collection, suggest how he might have dramatized incidents, atmosphere, and characters such as are found in John Masefield's narrative poem *Dauber.*

16. What other literature on the subject of buried treasure or the search for gold do you know?

17. In what great folk epic is a curse attached to the possession of gold?

18. What range of themes is found in O'Neill's plays?

19. How would you characterize O'Neill's sense of humor?

20. What contribution to the development of drama in America have the Provincetown Players made?

21. In what sense may any of O'Neill's plays be described as expressionistic?

22. Write the dialogue for a scene in which Sue and Danny are reunited.

23. Plan the lighting for a production of *Where the Cross Is Made.* Consult C. Harold Ridge, *Stage-Lighting for "Little" Theatres,* Cambridge, 1925; and Horace Shipp, "New Lamps for Old in the Theatre," *English Review,* Vol. XXXIII, pp. 395-402. London, 1921.

24. Compare the symbolism of *Gold, Where the Cross Is Made,* and *The Fountain.*

A WAY OUT

1. By what methods are the sympathetic fears of the audience aroused?

2. At what point in the play is it made clear that the stranger's motive is not robbery?

3. Note the dramatic irony of Asa's words in his twenty-first speech.

4. What virtue of primitive peoples is exhibited in Asa's behavior?

5. What is the motive back of the stranger's questions?

6. How does the reporter, who never appears on the scene, affect the plot?

7. What is the significance of the last speech of the play?

8. Compare this play with such dramatic poems of Robert Frost's as *Snow* (*Mountain Interval*), *The Self-Seeker* (*North of Boston*), *The Death of the Hired Man* (*North of Boston*), *In the Home Stretch* (*Mountain Interval*), and *The Witch of Coös* (*New Hampshire*). What resemblances do you find in method, material, and themes?

9. If Mr. Frost had chosen to make *A Way Out* a dramatic poem, which of the poems mentioned in the previous question would it in all probability most resemble?

10. How does Mr. Frost handle the problem of reproducing the Yankee dialect?

11. Why do critics mention J. M. Synge (see *Riders to the Sea* in Cohen's *One-Act Plays by Modern Authors*) and Robert Frost in the same breath?

12. What kind of dramatic poems does Wilfrid Wilson Gibson write?

13. Contrast life in towns and cities with the life of a community such as is indicated in *A Way Out.*

14. What evidences of gruesome humor are there in this play by Mr. Frost?

15. What type of plays do you expect from Mr. Frost's pen in the future?

16. What gives the average person away from New England the ability to understand the problem and the characters of *A Way Out?*

17. How would a director proceed in producing this play?

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